

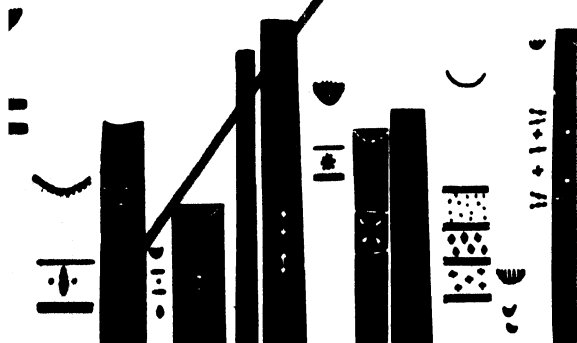
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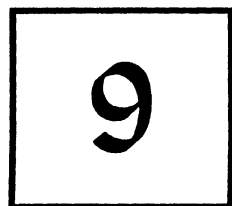
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NEW DIRECTIONS
NUMBER 9

**an
annual
exhibition
gallery
of
divergent
literary
trends
edited
by
james
laughlín**

NEW DIRECTIONS



published
by
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Note Regarding Contributions

Editorial selection of the material for the next New Directions Annual will be made in August, 1946. The Editor will be glad to read manuscripts if mailed to him first class at Norfolk, Connecticut. Stamped, self-addressed envelopes which fit the manuscript *must* be enclosed. Manuscripts received without such return envelopes or with envelopes which do not fit will be destroyed without acknowledgment. No express shipments will be accepted. The Editor is not more than average cranky or mean but he cannot afford to pay return postage for several hundred manuscripts and he does not have time to wrap up those sent with envelopes which do not fit, or with stamps but no envelopes. Material which has already appeared in magazines is, in instances of special merit, acceptable for this volume.

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*This volume of New Directions
is dedicated by its editor
to*

CLARA SEYMOUR ST JOHN

“Non si potria contar la sua piacenza,
Ch’a lei s’inchina ogni gentil virtute,
E la beltate per sua Dea la mostra.”

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

The French poet HENRI BARZUN, father of Jacques Barzun, now lives in this country. He has been an active exponent of the choral reading of poetry. At the present time regular work in this field is carried on at Wellesley College, the University of Colorado, Hunter College, Coe College and the University of Iowa, and in England at the Glasgow Festival. Of Barzun's great choral poem the *Orphéide*, a small portion of which is reproduced in this volume, his son has provided the following brief digest: "To the modern mind, the epic hero can no longer be a warrior bathed in the blood of his victims. On the contrary, he can only be an Orpheus, who with his peers brings back lost harmony and order to the world. How did the mythological hero do it? We do not know: it remained a mystery. In the present reworking of the theme, Orpheus and forty-nine companions embark on the ship *Atlas*, which is an airship and typifies the conquest of Space and Time as well as the intellectual perception of the globe as one world.

"The reality and the varied awareness of its parts are rendered through an orchestration of voices, each of which reveals its meaning and origin without outside explanation or ascription. To the four levels of epic doing—the physical journey, the intellectual discovery, the moral meaning, and the religious vision, there is added a fifth overtone: from the recurring hint that the flying ship is the earth itself, we are led to infer that the tragic fate of the voyagers is inescapable, in both senses: not to be warded off and not to be shirked. Our end is our re-beginning."

The most recent of JACQUES BARZUN's books is *Teacher in America*. He is a professor at Columbia. Barzun has in preparation a study of linguistic experiment which will be published at some future date by New Directions.

DAVID BAZELON lives in New York City and contributes frequently to the literary and political magazines. He is 22 years old and at one time or another did short stretches in the universities of Illinois, Virginia and Chicago.

One of the most important American literary prizes, the Kenyon Review—Doubleday, Doran Short Story Award, was won this year by JOHN BERRYMAN. Best known for his poetry, which was first introduced in *Five Young American Poets 1940*, followed by a New Directions book, *Poems*, Berryman is now building himself a substantial reputation as a prose stylist. He lives in Princeton, New Jersey.

HERBERT CAHOON is a native of Massachusetts and a Harvard man who has been for the past several years a reference librarian at the New York

Public Library. He has published plays in *Circle*, *Chimera* and other little magazines.

ALEX COMFORT has emerged as one of the leaders among the new English writers who are opposed to war to the extent of doing something about it. He is a doctor. His novel *The Power House* and his poems *The Song of Lazarus* have been published in this country by Viking Press.

The most recent books published by DAVID CORNEL DE JONG are: *Somewhat Angels*, a novel; *Domination of June*, poetry; and *With a Dutch Accent*, an autobiography. De Jong lives in Providence.

RALSTON CRAWFORD was born in 1906 in St. Catharines, Ontario, but is an American citizen. He is widely known as a prominent abstract painter as well as a successful commercial technician. His paintings are included in some of the best public and private collections in this country. He has just returned to this country for further assignment after serving in India with the 10th Headquarters Weather Squadron of the Army Air Forces. His work in devising new methods of visual representation of weather conditions for use in briefing, etc., has been highly praised by both military experts and by art critics.

MAYA DEREN has been a pioneer in the field of pure cinema, writing and producing several experimental films that have been widely shown to groups interested in the potentialities of this medium. These films are available for rental and requests may be addressed directly to Miss Deren at 61 Morton Street, New York City.

PAUL ELUARD lives in Paris. Some account of his activities in the French Resistance Movement is to be found in all of the articles on this subject which have been appearing in American periodicals. A book of translations of his early poetry, *Thorns of Thunder*, was published in London before the War. New Directions hopes soon to bring out a selection of his work here.

No biographical information has reached the editor regarding ALICE D. ESTES. Any reader who may have known her is urged to communicate such data as he may possess.

WILLIAM EVERSON is a native of California, having worked on the land in the great central valley until the war. A conscientious objector, he was interned in Camp Angel on the Oregon coast. There he founded the Untide Press, which has done such notable work in publishing the writing of non-conformists. He is the author of six books of poetry, among them *The Residual Years* and *War Elegies*.

JAMES T. FARRELL, author of the "Studs Lonigan" books and many others, lives in New York City. He has done more than any other writer to call

attention to the dangers inherent in the progressive commercialization of the American publishing business, and its sinister linkages with Hollywood. Copies of his essay in this volume are available in pamphlet form for mass distribution. His most recent book is *The League of Frightened Philistines*, a collection of essays on cultural subjects.

New Directions hopes soon to publish a book of the poems of JEAN GARRIGUE. She was first introduced to our readers as one of the *Five Young American Poets* of 1944. Last year she was the winner of the Kenyon Review Story Contest, and she is now at work on a novel for Doubleday Doran. She lives in New York.

The Vanguard Press recently published a book of PAUL GOODMAN's stories under the title *The Facts of Life*. Goodman is now at work on a book about Franz Kafka. He lives in New York and takes an active part in the intellectual life of the great city, publishing frequent articles on controversial topics in many fields. His novel *The Grand Piano* was published by The Colt Press a few years ago, and his poems were included in *Five Young American Poets* 1941.

MARGARET BLOY GRAHAM is a young Canadian artist now living in New York. The magazine *Tricolor* recently featured a number of her drawings.

Well known as a distinguished sculptor, MAUDE PHELPS HUTCHINS is becoming equally noted for her original plays and stories, many of which have recently appeared in the little magazines. Her long prose work-in-progress will be published by New Directions. She lives in Chicago.

The initials J L do *not* represent the editor of New Directions. They are those of a young Army officer who prefers to remain unidentified for the present. His poems first appeared in Dwight MacDonald's magazine *Politics*.

PHILIP LAMANTIA has renounced his affiliation with the New York Surrealist group and is now living in San Francisco again.

A selection of JAMES LAUGHLIN's poems was recently published by New Directions under the title of *Some Natural Things*.

LE COMTE DE LAUTREAMONT was the pen name chosen by Isidore Ducasse (1846-1870), author of the first great classic of Surrealist prose, *Maldoror*, published in this country in the translation of Guy Wernham by New Directions. Besides his masterpiece, the only writing by Ducasse which survives is the "Preface" here published. No trace has ever been found of the manuscript of poems for which this preface was written, and many scholars think that it never was written, or perhaps even seriously con-

templated. In itself, this preface is hardly a work of literary importance, but it does throw a little additional light on the mind of one of the most curious figures in French literature. GUY WERNHAM, the translator, is an Englishman who lives in San Francisco.

GEORGE LEITE is editor of *Circle*, most energetic and lively of California's little magazines. He is also a sardine fisherman.

One writer who did not let the war interfere with his output is ROBERT LOWRY, originally of Cincinnati where he founded the Little Man Press, now of New York City where he is associated with New Directions. While serving in the army in North Africa, Lowry got hold of a mimeograph machine and published some of his stories which were, to put it mildly, hardly militaristic in sentiment right under the noses of the censors. Later on, when stationed in Italy, he located an Italian printer who could set English and published three small but beautifully designed volumes of his stories and poems. An Italian translation of a short novel which Lowry wrote about American soldiers on leave in Rome is soon to be brought out by an Italian publisher there.

LLOYD MALLAN is widely known for his sympathetic translations of Latin-American poetry. His home is Pittsburgh, but he is now travelling in South America.

New Directions now carries five books by HENRY MILLER in print: *The Cosmological Eye*, *The Wisdom of the Heart*, *Sunday after the War*, *The Colossus of Maroussi* and *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare*, the last-named being a collection of essays about a journey through the USA which Miller made when he returned from Paris at the outbreak of the war. He is now living on a mountainside overlooking the Pacific at Big Sur, California.

PAUL PALMER is an editor of *The Readers Digest*. His parody in this number is one of a series of four on the same theme, the other victims being William Faulkner, Pearl Buck and S. S. Van Dine.

BORIS PASTERNAK is one of the great figures in contemporary Russian writing. It is indicative of his prestige that he has been allowed to pursue a course independent of the immediate objectives of the Stalin regime without molestation. His work is still little known in this country, though a few translations of poems have appeared from time to time. His writings are now being systematically translated and published in London, under the editorship of Stefan Schimanski, and New Directions hopes to publish the books here. Pasternak was born in Moscow in 1890, son of a painter and musician. At one time he studied law, at another philosophy. He wrote some music early in life under the influence of Scriabine. Later he travelled in Germany and Italy. During the first War he worked in a factory in the

Urals. Later he held a post in the Library of the Commissariat of Education. He seems never, however, to have been obliged to turn out propaganda writing. Pasternak began writing poetry around 1912 and his collected works appeared in the Thirties. He has also written a small number of very remarkable pieces of prose, in more or less experimental vein, one of them being the *Tratto de Appelle*, which is here published. The exact date of composition of this work is not known but it first appeared in book form in 1925. Pasternak's short autobiography, *Safe Conduct*, appeared in 1931. He has also translated a number of Shakespeare's plays into Russian, and also such poets as Goethe, Verlaine, Kleist and others.

The newspaper PM recently accorded KENNETH PATCHEN the signal honor of publishing complete the first chapter of his book *The Memoirs of a Shy Pornographer* in its Sunday magazine section. New Directions will soon publish a selection of Patchen's poetry, chosen from six earlier volumes, in its New Classics Series. His important prose book *The Journal of Albion Moonlight* was re-issued last year and has been enjoying a wide subterranean circulation. Patchen and his wife live in the Village in New York.

KENNETH REXROTH, poet, abstract painter and mountaineer, lives in San Francisco. He has twice been awarded the Commonwealth Medal for poetry. His most recent book is *The Phoenix & The Tortoise*, published by New Directions. The play published in this issue is the first of a cycle on which he is at work.

During the War TASILO RIBISCHKA served with distinction in the OSD, where his knowledge of almost every European language made him invaluable. He is now in Brownell General Hospital, recovering from a rare illness contracted in the marshes of Dalmatia.

Probably the most promising of the serious young writers in New Zealand is FRANK SARGESON. His stories have been published in earlier volumes of *New Directions*, and in England he has appeared in *New Writing* and had a novel published by The Hogarth Press. He lives in Takapuna, which is a suburb of Auckland.

HARVEY VIVIAN was a lieutenant in the Royal Airforce. He wrote the poem included in this volume while interned in a German prison camp.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS has had two popular plays enjoying long runs on Broadway, *The Glass Menagerie* and *You Touched Me*, the latter based on an idea suggested by Donald Windham from D. H. Lawrence's story of the same name. Williams' play *Battle of Angels* was published as the first number of the magazine *Pharos*, while ten of his one-act plays are available in the New Directions book, *27 Wagons Full of Cotton & Other*

One-Act Plays. A selection of his poetry was published in *Five Young American Poets 1944*, while his short stories have been appearing in the magazines, notably "The Malediction" in *Town & Country*. His long story *One-Arm* will soon be published in a limited edition by New Directions.

New Directions has published eight books by WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS, the writing doctor of Rutherford, New Jersey, they being, in order: *White Mule*, a novel; *Life Along The Passaic River*, short stories; *In The American Grain*, essays in history; *The Collected Poems*; *In The Money*, a novel; *The Broken Span*, poems; *First Act*, which is the two novels re-issued in one volume; and *Paterson*, first section of a long poem.

EDITOR'S NOTES

WITH the publication of this number *New Directions* reaches its tenth anniversary. Because of wartime production difficulties which forced me to skip the years 1943 and 1945 this volume is numbered only IX, but it was in 1936 that the first appeared, issued in an enthusiastically juvenile way while I was still a sophomore at Harvard and printed by the same printer in a Vermont country town who used to get up the *Harvard Advocate*. It would be almost impossible not to be sentimental about this decade of work, so filled has it been with events and relationships which in their variety and interest far exceeded anything which a young publisher might reasonably have expected. I have been privileged to work with a good number of the important serious writers in America and the experience has been . . . well, to put it very crudely, educational. If from this gradual education in the nature of the creative personality I have formed any dominant impression it must certainly be one of wonder coupled with respect—wonder that there are any serious writers left at all in a society which so consistently neglects and insults their genius, and respect for the tenacity of those who somehow manage to persist in their devotion to the best traditions of their art in the face of incredibly unfavorable conditions.

The past ten years have seen a slight improvement in the situation of the serious writer, but not nearly enough. There are today more "little magazines" which are able to make a small payment to their contributors than there were in 1936. And the present combination of booming business with high excess profits taxes has persuaded a number of rich commercial publishers to make temporary investments in "prestige writers." But there has been little fundamental change in the attitude of the sinners who are profiting from the control of our literary activities toward writers whose desire it is to write a good book before a book that will have a wide sale.

In the course of ten years I have used quite a number of derogatory epithets to denote the gentlemen who operate the most flagrantly commercial of our great publishing houses, our widely read magazines, some of our literary agencies, our theatres, our motion picture industry and sometimes even our libraries, universities and so-called "liberal" journals, but I think I like the term "sinners" about the best of them all. For me, who passed a good part of the Sundays of my youth under the stone pulpits of the Presbyterian churches of Pittsburgh, the word "sinner" is redolent of Hell and its fires, and I sincerely hope that the worst of these pecunious offenders who are polluting our culture will burn there for a considerable length of time.

Perhaps you may think that I am joking, but I assure you that I am not. I have been far too close to the suffering of twenty or thirty first-rate talents

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to whom our famous "American way of life" has offered the choice of writing trash or living worse than a dog in the streets ever to curb my resentment against the people responsible for their predicament. These *respected citizens will tell you that they are guiltless, that they are only giving the public what it wants, but that is only a very poor half-truth.* The public "wants" what it is being given because it is so hard for it even to learn of the existence of anything else. But I have proven to my own satisfaction that when the public is given access to good writing it will prefer it to the commercial product, provided it has the education to cope with the values involved. You can hardly expect even the most intelligent highschool graduate to enjoy the *Quartets* of T. S. Eliot; but a high percentage of college graduates if exposed to the novels of, say, E. M. Forster, will quickly recognize that they are "getting more out of them"—both pleasure and knowledge of life—than they get out of *The Robe* or *Forever Amber*. The war has provided an interesting proving ground for this sort of test because many men have had time to read as soldiers who seldom opened a book in civilian life. The letters that have come to my office from army camps and from war vessels have indicated how readily such readers form good tastes rather than bad when some happy coincidence puts good books into their hands.

Why then does the commercial publisher not encourage good writers and promote the best books? Why does the Broadway producer continue to back plays that are slick and cheap? Why does Hollywood . . . Oh, you can answer that question with half a dozen words—habit, cowardice, greed, stupidity . . . take a little something from all of them and you have the mentality of your typical big-time literary operator. Each case has its special variants, but the common denominator is the idea of "business," of what is "good business," of what will pay off. And they believe that the biggest jackpot comes from applying to books and writing the merchandising methods developed to sell the mass production of ice boxes, hair oil and chewing gum. Books are no longer literature, they are merchandise. More care and effort goes into the packaging (fancy jackets) and promotion than goes into the writing. Every day some new and more disgusting ulcer forces its way to the skin of the putrified body—just yesterday I read in a trade journal that Warner Brothers have established a special department to "inspire ideas" for writers to make into books and later into pictures. Operator . . . give me long distance . . . give me Hollywood . . . I feel wonderful, I'm in love, I want to write a little poem . . . but I guess I'd better check with David O. Selznick first!

One of the most important contributions to this present volume, and I consider it so impressive that I have had offprints prepared for quantity distribution by interested individuals and groups, is a detailed analysis of

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the increasing commercialization of American publishing and its related fields by James T. Farrell. Mr. Farrell is best known as a novelist who does not hesitate to write about life as it actually is, but he is also a profound *scholar who has extended his interest in the human animal to a study of social habits and economics. He shows very clearly how the trend to make publishing a business rather than the adjunct of an art is being carried to the ultimate conclusion logical for a society organized as ours is for the most complete exploitation of the power of money to make money.*

Mr. Farrell's study is thorough and far-reaching; there is very little that I could add to it except concrete examples by the score which would reinforce his evidence. If anything, he has been too lenient, and attributed good qualities to certain of the sinners which, if they possess them at all they certainly do little to exhibit by their actions. Where I do take issue with Mr. Farrell is in his unwillingness to suggest a more radical program of counter-action for writers who do not wish to feed their talents like dog meat into Donderbeck's Giant Sausage Machine. Mr. Farrell calls upon writers to fight back by setting good examples. That helps—every good book that is written in the teeth of the thousands of bad ones *does* help—but it isn't enough. Mr. Farrell calls upon the young writers who want to be serious artists to be strong, and to resist in the face of the discouragements and the poverty and the sense of exile that will be their lot. But I wonder how many of them really have the strength and the perseverance, the sheer enduring guts, to be kicked around year in year out and not lose hope. Our metropolitan civilization is not one which makes it easy for a man to be a hermit and live on what the ravens bring him. And I do not think we can fairly demand of a great artistic talent that it should always be found in the same body with powers of spiritual fortitude and endurance. We have instances—glorious instances—of men like James Joyce who carried on through years of difficulty and never compromised in any way. But how many lost Joyces may there have been who had not the strength for such an ordeal? Joyce too, had in the latter part of his life the patronage of Harriet Weaver, an unassuming Englishwoman who backed up her faith in his genius with an annuity and to whom the world owes a gratitude it will be most unlikely to render articulate. Here in America our wealthy patrons seem almost unfailingly to struggle out the second rate for the objects of their philanthropy.

No, I think it is far too much to ask of the writer that he shoulder such a task alone. Looking back over ten years' of advance-guard publishing I ask myself again and again: "What ever happened to X? What has become of M? Why aren't they writing? They were wonderfully promising. Why did they stop?" And the answer is, in almost every case: discouragement with the difficulty and the poverty and the lack of recognition offered to

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the poet or the writer of unconventional material. Damn your souls, you fat sinners swilling at the Stork and 21, driving your Cadillacs down Sunset Boulevard, throwing your penthouse parties, you cannot give us a literary culture with your occasional conscience-salving uncoordinated, half-heartedly promoted publication of a book of poems by some young man whom you think you can seduce away from his true art into writing one of your slick novels!

No, the young writer cannot go it alone. But suppose that he were not alone? Suppose that he could count on the support of others of his kind? Others who had learned that the policy of every man for himself gets nowhere in the long run? Others who were ready to band together to form media for publication that would organize to solidify and increase the public for good books—for writing that is in the tradition of literature?

We have a very big country. We have a lot of literate, partly educated people in it. We have a lot of money in circulation. There is really no reason why a public cannot be built that will support a small literary culture. In both England and France, which are so much smaller and poorer than we are, there is a much better situation for the serious writer. The other day I was reading a copy of Sartre's novel *La Nausée*. It was its thirteenth printing! Yet that is a book no American commercial publisher would dare to touch, a finely written novel about a philosophical idea, one which makes no compromise to the mob tastes. What is the answer? Is it just that the French are so much better educated than we are? Is it that labor costs are so much lower there that publishers can afford to take more risks? I don't think so. I think it is because over the years a unified public has been formed in France for serious writing and that the state of criticism there is high enough so that when a fine book appears it is brought forcefully to the attention of that public.

Here in America good literary criticism practically does not exist as far as the general public is concerned. In the mass circulation literary papers the reviewing is done largely by people who are not critics but simply puffers and touters. They take their cue from the advertisements of the publishers and shower slobbery praise on utter mediocrity. When a fine book comes along, unless it happens to be safe and conventional, they either ignore it or ridicule it. We do have some very good critics in this country—men who analyze brilliantly on the basis of a deep and wide knowledge of world literature of the past—but they are only invited to write for comparatively small-circulation magazines. Their voices are not even a whisper in the great roar of yes-men celebrating the inferior commercial product. So the serious writer gets little support from that quarter. No responsive public of really discriminating readers is built up for him by the critics. And it will not be built up in this way in the coming years

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when the book business is following its downward path toward monolithic structure.

Another factor that now hinders the formation of a solid public for fine writing is one having the nature of pure confusion, a confusion created because the serious writers now publish with so many different publishers who are not primarily promoting good writing. To understand this situation let us imagine a hypothetical case: Tarpon is a serious young writer who has just published a book, a good book, with the commercial firm of Mumble & Co. (Mumbles published the book because they hope to be able to get Tarpon in his next book to write something a little more in the popular vein; they will do this by advancing him money against future royalties and then, when a round debt has been established, taking advantage of his sense of obligation.) Amanda Twinkle is a well-educated young schoolteacher in Corn City, Iowa. She got to like good literature at Coe College and now she would like to find modern books to read that will give her something of the same literary experience. If she could get hold of Tarpon's book she would appreciate it; she would become a Tarpon fan and would support his effort to write artistic truth about this strange, strange world we live in. There are probably a good many thousands like her in various parts of America.

But how is Amanda ever going to know that Tarpon's book is the one she is looking for? The chances are about 500 to 1 against her being a subscriber to one of the magazines whose critics are going to like Tarpon's book. And if she reads Mumble & Co.'s advertising she will never guess what sort of book it is because Mumbles' copywriter has been doing his best to make the book sound like the sort of book which would make a good Hollywood movie. And if Amanda has read any other books published by Mumble & Co. she will never imagine that Mumbles would publish anything of the kind she hopes to find. Supposing Amanda goes to her local library and asks for advice? Statistics show that the public libraries of America buy and promote 25 bestsellers or detective stories to every serious book which they buy. Librarians think more or less what they are told to think in trade journals or review media which are heavily dependent on commercial publishers' advertising. Supposing that Amanda goes to her bookstore in Corn City for advice? Statistics show that in the whole of the United States there are less than 100 bookstores which do not operate largely on the principal that it is better business to sell one hundred copies of the same bestseller than ten copies each of ten different books with individuality.

No friends, Amanda is in a right bad fix. From where we sit it does not look at all likely that Tarpon's book will fall into her hands and that a beautiful relationship will develop, the kind of relationship between an

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honest writer and a discriminating reader which, if you multiply it by the number of fair-sized towns in America would mean a public large enough to support a purely literary culture.

Now here, folks, is where that soft organ music begins to play with that dollars-dollars-dollars murmur and the lights dim down to a sexy rose and Albert & Alfred the Happiness Boys take over our little story. It is a balmy day in early June and Amanda Twinkle is wandering along beside the C. B. & Q. RR tracks just east of Corn City. Suddenly a book falls at her feet. It has been hurled from the window of the speeding streamline train (and the fact that the windows of such trains do not open is of little relevance because our prop man will fix that, and quick!) by Mr. Augustine Oog, the well-known Broadway producer who is Hollywood bound to sign up Lauren Bacall for his new play *Eat Me Daddy*. Mr. Oog has thrown the book away because he thinks it stinks. A friend gave it to him. It don't make sense. The train speeds by. The Gods have nodded. Amanda picks up the sturdy little attractively printed volume. It is a New Directions Book! (soft rattling of muffled drums) Amanda takes it home. She loves it. It feeds that hungry spot in the back of her soul. It isn't by Tarpon, but it's by Haddock, who is every bit as good. Amanda writes to the remote little office tucked away in a tiny suite in the Empire State Building where the earnest young man whom Clifton Fadiman once referred to as the John-the-Baptist of American Publishing is busy saving culture single-handed and orders more New Directions Books. She loves them *all*. New Directions never lets her down. It publishes only good books and nothing else. She is a happy girl. The days fly for her and she hardly resents it any more that none of the fine young business men in Corn City seem to want to take her out parking in their new Chevrolets. . . .

Yes, friends, that is indeed a beautiful story, is it not? Little you grieve that the price of admission is now \$1.25 where it used to be 44 cents. But there is just one bug in the jam, friends, just one. The chances are mathematically about 46,567,533 to 1 against our little drama's ever occurring in real life. For New Directions is just one pebble on a very large beach; it has the energy and means to publish perhaps ten or fifteen writers in a regular, systematic way.

But supposing that Tarpon and half a hundred of his friends get together and thrash out their problems . . . suppose they come to realize that the big publishers are not really their disinterested friends . . . suppose it dawns on them that the way to build a solid public for good writing in this country is to set up unadulterated channels . . . suppose they make up their minds to start pulling together instead of each trying to beat the other to that fat advance that is waiting for one of them but not for all of them over at Mumble & Co. . . . suppose they approach five or six of the

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smaller publishers, firms manned by men who really like good books, and make them this sort of a proposition: you give up publishing any junk at all and concentrate on our stuff, serious stuff . . . soon the lovers of serious writing will learn they can trust you and will buy almost everything you publish . . . they will attract others with like tastes to the books you publish . . . soon they may form a sufficiently integrated public so that periodicals can be put out for them on a paying basis which will print the best criticism and help build up deep literary understanding . . . you do this for us and in return we will stick with you . . . we won't desert you for the big money operators when we become "names" and have big successes . . . we will attract to you the new young writers of serious merit who come along after us . . . together we will build up a common front and a continuity and a tradition . . . we will give America a cohesive public for fine writing like that in France . . . we will make America a place where a writer can be a sincere artist without seeing his family go in rags . . . we will be content with a modest way of living, enough to get by on, because we are free to write what we want to write . . . and we think you will be satisfied with modest profits and willing to work hard for good books because the very fact that you have in you the qualities which enable you to differentiate shows us that you are a human being of a higher grade than the fellows who think that a book is just another kind of a commodity to make a million dollars out of!

Just an impractical pipe dream? Something too idealistic ever to work out with a group of people like writers who are, almost by definition, cantankerous, jealous and uncooperative? Perhaps. But read Mr. Farrell's article and think the thing through. See where writers will be if they *don't* start taking some sort of collective action!

* * *

Turning back, then, to problems less theoretical, a few random notes on matters at hand.

Recapitulation, for any readers who are new to these volumes: this is an exhibition gallery of divergent trends, a place where writers with new methods or ideas can give them a testing in print and a public showing, a place where significant work from other countries can be put up for the examination of our native writers. It is *not* my selection of the "best" (meaningless term!) writing of the year. Much of the finest writing being done now is in perfectly conventional and accepted forms. Fine. There are other places where that writing can be published, little magazines like *Accent* and *Story*, *Partisan Review* and *View*, *Sewanee Review* and *Kenyon Review*. Even *The Atlantic Monthly* has fallen into the habit of publishing good writing now and then! *New Directions* exists as a place for the pub-

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lication of experiment and the unconventional—necessary, vitally necessary, because a healthy literary culture must be continually spading up some new ground.

In the last few years many good critics have been saying that the experimental vein of the pre-War period is exhausted. I should not be surprised if they were right. Greatly as I admire the work of certain writers whom we have been publishing in these volumes I sense that their evolution is not really going ahead. I sometimes think that oldsters like Cummings and Williams are more "advance-guard" than some of the men half their age. This is not to impugn the sincerity of these latter, or to devalue their effort. But everything seems to point toward a new tendency, a direction that will stress clarity, that will embody the peoples' will away from the idea of war, that will somehow use the particular forms of American existence for something more than mere decoration. But I can no more define this coming tendency accurately than I can put my finger on the writers who will make it. If I could, I would probably write it myself.

I have been severely criticized for publishing Eluard because he is said to be a Stalinist. He is a killer, they tell me; he killed Germans with his poems. Very well: I have two answers to that. Much as I am opposed to the whole business of war and legal killing I would probably have done, or tried to do, exactly what Eluard did under similar circumstances. And secondly, I don't care whether he is a Stalinist or what he is; the man can *write*. He is a poet and no mistake. That's enough for me. I am one who still thinks Ezra Pound's poetry is good—very good—notwithstanding his political folly. These people who changed their minds about the merits of Pound's poetry the day he was indicted for treason make me sick and angry. A poem is a thing in itself. You judge it by itself, for itself and of itself—not by the politics of the man who wrote it.

Ten years of *New Directions*. That calls for some kind of a birthday cake, and it will take the form of an anthology called *Spearhead*, to be published late in 1946. This volume will try to document by example the main trends in American experimental writing in the ten years between 1936 and the end of the War. It will not by any means be limited to material that has appeared in *New Directions* books. The editorial approach is historical. All schools are being represented and many critics have been consulted to determine which writers are most representative of the various tendencies that have flourished during the period.

Economics. Mr. Farrell does not say so in his article, but he rather infers that we won't have a good literary culture in this country under capitalism as now existing. Mr. Farrell is for socialism; I am for Social Credit, as I have been for the past fifteen years. Nothing has happened to change my belief that our basic approach to the problem of money and credit must be

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revised, that we must set up a credit system that will make democracy economic as well as political. The War has acted out the pattern predicated by the Social Credit analysis of the faults of bank capitalism line for line and figure for figure. The confusions of our international policy reflect the unsoundness of our home economy. Sure, the market is going up! Sure, everybody is striking and getting more wages! Wonderful—for a few months, a few years . . . but brother, take my advice and strap a good soft cushion on your bottom . . . the trip down will be quick and fast and the landing sudden. There are going to be business cycles—crashes and booms—just as long as credit is left in the hands of private forces which expand and contract it for profit. Credit *must* be socialized. It must be diffused totally through the society on whose unity it is based and its rate of expansion scaled to the normal, healthy growth of our economy. There is now one Social Credit member in the British House of Commons. Well, that's a start!

—J. LAUGHLIN

NEW DIRECTIONS
NUMBER 9

THE SOLDIERS

ALEX COMFORT

I wonder sometimes if the soldiers lying
under the soil, wrapped in their coats like beggars
sleeping under an arch, their hands filled with leaves

could take vengeance for once on the men who sent them,
coming back like beggars, seeing the homes and fields
that their obedience lost to them, the men of all countries

whether they would have anything to say
ghostly at frosty windows to sons or brothers
other than this—"Obedience is death.

If you are willing to die, then choose obedience.

"We who are here now, men of all nations
our hands full of twigs, stones on our eyes,
half afraid of what we have done (but that is forgotten

a short wild dream, when we were other men
not ourselves—but now we are ourselves again. . . .)
tradesmen, farmers, students—it is we who are telling you

you must choose carefully, for your life, and not only your life
will depend on it, in years or days, between believing
like us, that by obedience you could help or profit

the land, the fields, the people: and saying death is obedience. . . .

"Because we know now that every cause is just
and the roots do not discriminate between the aggressor
and the dead child, the regrettable necessity

and the foul atrocity—the grass is objective
and turns all Citizens into green mounds—
we have had time, as soldiers always have time,

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resting before Plataea or Dunkirk or Albuera
to think about obedience—though we will still spring up
at the whistle; it is too late to withdraw—that someone must pay
for all this, and it will be the people.

“We have nothing to tell you but this: to choose carefully
and if you must still obey, we are ready,
your fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers, to find you

a place at our dry table, to greet you as soldiers
with dry a nod, and sit, elbow to elbow,
silently for always under the sky of soil:

but know you are choosing. When they begin to appeal
to your better nature, your righteous indignation,
your pity for men like yourselves, stand still

look down and see the lice upon your hide.

“It may be that you, or else your children, at last
will put down your hand and crush them. But if not
remember that we are waiting, good men as you,

not fools, but men who knew the price of obeying,
the lice for what they were, the Cause for a fraud,
hoped for no change and cherished no illusions;

and we will see your mounds spring up in clusters
beside our own, and welcome you with a nod,
crucified like us all, all fellow-ghosts together,

not fooled by the swine, but going with open eyes.

“You have only to speak for once—they will melt like dust:
you have only to spit in their faces—they will go
howling like devils to swindle somebody else

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but if you choose to obey, we shall not blame you
for every lesson is new. We will make room for you
in the cold hall where every cause is just.

Perhaps you'll go with us to frosty windows
putting the same choice as the years go round
or sit debating 'When will they disobey?'

wrapped in our coats against the impartial cold."
All this I think the buried men would say,
clutching their white ribs and their rusted helmets

nationless bones, under the still ground.

WILL THE COMMERCIALIZATION
OF PUBLISHING DESTROY GOOD WRITING?
SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE FUTURE OF BOOKS

JAMES T. FARRELL

THE magazine *Tide* (August 15, 1945) printed an article on "Book Publishing" which stated: "With the prospect of more paper for book publishers in the not far distant future, the big publishers are girding themselves for the biggest expansion and probably the greatest competition in their history." This article gives an account of the connections of the four big reprint companies which are now becoming the dominating organizations in the book business and also mentions something about their post-war plans which are not as yet fully crystallized. The major publishers, the article remarks, "agree that the industry is changing and will possibly evolve into a quite different animal." Many have said the same thing, both in public and in private discussion. Publishers, writers, editors, economic journalists and others are all asking questions about what will happen in the book business. Contradictory predictions are being made, some gloomy, some optimistic. In general, there is a great deal of interest, curiosity, alarm and uncertainty in literary and publishing circles about these recent developments.

During the war, a number of people discussed the future of books. Philistine literary critics dealt with this question in terms of mere tendency and predicted that in the post-war world writing would grow up, which meant that it would become as smug as they are. The way that writing would grow up, according to Mr. J. Donald Adams and others, was that it would become "spiritual." One of the ironies of these discussions and predictions lay in the fact that while the book critics were so concerned with the souls of authors and of the American public, and with the status of the Deity in American literature, the major developments in the book world were economic in character. Current interest in the book world is now mainly centered in the economic features of publishing.

A number of serious critics have repeatedly discussed the differences between literature and commerce in American culture. A question posed for a number of writers has been formulated in terms of the opposition between success and integrity. Now, with changes in the book business, gloomy prophets and disturbed writers are predicting that in the future it will be impossible for writers to retain any integrity and that American writing will become merely a success chronicle of commercialized writing. It will be, they say, Hollywoodized. Heretofore, questions of this kind

have usually been dealt with in terms of a juxtaposition of "high culture" and "low culture." "High culture" has been treated as serious art and viewed as the concern of gifted, sensitive and educated people; "low culture" has been dismissed as cheap popular art, spiritual fare for the uneducated masses. This view can be very misleading, for what has long been happening in this country is that a commercial culture has been developing and expanding. It has confused cultural values, and has almost totally absorbed the theatre. Books have not been unaffected; in fact, the fear of commercialized culture is the source of current alarm about the future of books. At present it is easy to make rash predictions. Publishing is now in a very problematic state. It is not my purpose to try to offer any definitive answers to the questions involved or to make over-all predictions. I wish, instead, to present some observations relating to these questions which will, I hope, serve as a basis for further discussions. Authors and interested readers should attempt to orient themselves concerning the book business. It is of real meaning to them that they watch what is now happening in the publishing world.

II

Book publishers on the whole, as is well known, enjoyed phenomenal prosperity during the War. Hampered by paper restrictions and shortages in manpower and materials, they were unable to supply the full demands of the swollen market. Describing this situation, one publisher remarked that any book would sell as long as it contained either words or pictures; if it contained neither, there would be difficulties in selling it. However, he also added, if the book were too good, it might be a little difficult to sell. During this boom the reprint houses rose to a position where they now are becoming the dominant factors in the book world. Perhaps the degree of their expansion is suggested by the statement of *Tide* that Pocket Books sold 30,000,000 paper-covered reprints at 25¢ in 1944. And it is to be noted that the four big companies discussed by *Tide* are all reprint houses.

Publishing, which has always been a highly competitive business, is now moving into a period of feverish rivalries on all sides. The reprint houses are competing for distribution outlets, for authors and reprint rights, for motion picture tie-ups and for access to production facilities. This rivalry is the central fact in the economics of the book business today.

Tide lists the four major rivals and specifies their connections and the advantages each holds against the others. They are: Simon & Schuster; Doubleday, Doran & Co.; World Publishing Company; and the combination of Harper & Bros., Random House, Little Brown & Co., Charles Scribner & Sons and the Book of the Month Club. *Tide* further states: "Each

of the four combines has been dabbling with one or more of the four elements that make for publishing concentration: a regular [trade] house, a reprint house, a book club and a pocket-sized book house."

Simon & Schuster, already a rich company, was bought by Marshall Field, and new capital has been invested in it. In connection with Sears Roebuck it has a People's Book Club; it owns Pocket Books; it has organized a new Venture Press, which plans to print the work of hitherto unpublished novelists. This last has been interpreted by some as a means by which Simon & Schuster would line up new authors and thereby try to squeeze out the independent publishers.

Doubleday Doran & Co. is undoubtedly the biggest of these four companies. *Tide* states that it owns its own plant and that it does a large part of its own printing and binding. This is not definitely confirmable and, in fact, has been denied; but it is reported that the company is planning to build a new plant of its own. Whether or not Doubleday Doran & Co. owns or doesn't own its plant, builds or doesn't build a new one, it is still the biggest company in publishing. Through subsidiaries it controls a large share of the reprint business by publication of Triangle Books (49¢), the New Home Library (69¢) and Star Dollar Books, Blue Ribbon Books and the Sun Dial Press (from 70¢ to \$1.49). In addition to its regular trade house it controls book clubs: The Literary Guild with a reported membership of 900,000, making it larger than the Book of the Month Club; the Doubleday Doran Book Club with 400,000 members; the Book League of America with 200,000 members; the Junior Literary Guild with 20,000 members. It also has its own chain of retail book stores, established on a national basis.

The combination of four publishers recently purchased the reprint firm of Grosset & Dunlap, a large, well-established business, and it also recently announced that it would enter the 25¢ field with a new series, Bantam Books.* The Book of the Month Club, affiliated with this combine, has a reported membership of 600,000.

The World Publishing Company began by printing Bibles and dictionaries. It owns a huge plant in Cleveland, and entered the reprint field in 1934. Today it is a major and very rich reprint house, but it has no subsidiaries. One of its advantages against rivals is its network of distribution outlets in chain stores and on news stands. Through this important kind of outlet, it is now beginning to challenge the 25¢ paper-backed editions.

Besides these four big rivals there are also in this field the Avon Company, which prints pocket-sized books of short stories and mystery stories, and Penguin Books.

* Despite this combination, of course, Scribners, Little Brown & Co., Random House and Harpers will remain separate trade firms and, as such, they will remain competitors.

"Despite this impending growth," the *Tide* article concludes, "there is not much indication that Wall Street is interested in the industry but it's an even bet it will be if the reprint field develops into the big business that is anticipated."

This being the situation, let us now look at some of its implications.

III

War economy did not create this new situation; it only accelerated the momentum toward bigness in publishing, which in turn has attracted fresh capital. The war boom demonstrated positively that mass production and distribution in books are both feasible and highly profitable. These developments are irreversible. Their structural consequences are revealed in the tendency toward combinations and centralization. Inevitably every phase of book business will become more concentrated than in the past. This concentration will increase the difficulties of operation for small and independent publishers, and it will probably have the effect of requiring a higher initial investment from any newcomers into the field. In other words, the scale of publishing will be enlarged, and money will talk more than ever. It is already common knowledge that books which have the largest advertising budgets most frequently receive prompt and long reviews, and that those selected by a large book club are generally treated as important books by the majority of reviewers. The immediate, if not the permanent reputations of many writers are related to such factors.

The American publishing business has long existed in a very fluid state. Consider the number of new houses and new figures who have risen to importance during the last two decades. Here the basis of rise is not rooted in new and revolutionary technological developments. The best conditions for advancement in publishing are to be found in having a lot of money to invest, in having new ideas for promotion and advertising, in having the charms of a contact man and the inclination to live in the limelight of glamor. Book publishing, if it is to play any progressive cultural role at all, constantly demands new figures. From this standpoint, the types it needs are men with disinterestedness, sympathy for new currents in writing, liberality of view, cultivation and love of books. But such types now usually become employees, rather than publishers, and they are likely to exert a decreasing editorial influence in the future. Present conditions suggest that this tendency will continue as the concentration of publishing progresses. Centuries ago, Aquinas, writing on glory, declared: "It is better to know than to be known." In publishing, this statement is gradually being dialectically reversed.

Not the least of the effects of the rise of the reprint houses will be the strengthening of the influence and pressure of commercial considerations. The enlarged scale of publishing will require increased efforts to minimize risks. Now more than ever publishers will be forced to be receptive to bestseller books. The practice of thinking up and concocting likely best-sellers in publishing offices and the minds of literary agents will grow more widespread than it is now. Ghost writing will become a better paying occupation.

The effort to minimize risks will be reflected in the type of publicity released from many publishing offices. Authors, especially of the female sex, will be continuously glamorized. A larger number of them than is now the case will probably become, along with movie stars, the witty heroes and heroines of *Café Society* and the gossip columns. More important, there will be increased budgets for book advertising as long as business prospers.* On the whole, book advertising has never been much different from general commercial advertising, but the thin line of demarcation is now disappearing. Publishers are beginning to use radio, billboards and similar sources of advertising.† One of the principal emphases which will be made in these ads will be that of appeal to conformity. They will attempt to interest the public in books by stating that inasmuch as one hundred thousand or one million or more of your fellow citizens have read a certain book, you also should read it. And popular reviewing will probably become more debased than it now is.

With the increase of book advertising budgets and the greater glamorization of authors, both books and authors will become newsworthy, thereby enhancing the strategic importance of a few regular book reviewers. Gradually, and in inverse proportion to the tepidness and vapidness of what is said, the slavery of column book reviewing is growing into a better paid profession, and book reviewing is becoming more centralized. The decline of book reviewing in New York and the growth of the widely syndicated book column is paralleled by the emptiness of most unsyndicated provin-

* At a public symposium of book publishers on the future of books held last winter one publisher characterized the money he spent on advertising as money used for "educational" purposes. In a sense, of course, this is true; advertising is education, not for mental growth, but for the market.

† The radio program "Author Meets Critic" is now a national one. With few exceptions the books discussed on this program are the ones which sell best and receive most attention from reviewers. Mr. Bennett Cerf, publisher of Random House books and the Modern Library, has for several years conducted a radio book program, "Books are Bullets." Books which received popular attention and, in addition, which usually conformed to the accepted interpretations of the War were the principal ones discussed on this program. It is needless to stress the point that immediately popular books are very often only of transient significance. Programs of this kind magnify that transient significance, however, and help toward effecting greater centralization of passing tendencies and literary and ideational fashions.

cial reviews: a number of them are now scarcely even literate.* This situation is rapidly reaching the point where it is almost impossible in these days to write a bad novel. If the comments of some of our widely read reviewers be taken as honest criticism, it is clear that these United States have become groggy with genius. In fact, "greatness" is so common in current reviews that the only way left anyone to become a distinguished writer is to be a bad one.

The foregoing should make it clear that all tendencies which lead to a bestseller culture will probably be strengthened as publishing centralizes. The importance of money, of the sum invested in a book and more broadly in a publishing house should, in consequence, be more nakedly revealed. As weaker publishers are forced out of business, the stronger will grow all the more powerful. Business accelerates itself in a complicated rather than in a single, straight-line manner.

Reprint houses and regular trade houses are now linked together through the fact that the same persons control both. This is the case in three of the four major companies mentioned above. The owners and executives involved claim that this linkage will not affect the editorial policies of their associated trade houses. We can accept such declarations at face value. Undoubtedly these men have no intention of making their trade policies merely subservient to the needs of reprint houses. Nevertheless, the book business has developed to the point where factors more important than subjective intentions are beginning to play the decisive role. The market is emerging as almost all-important. This tends, especially in the reprint business, toward the creation of a kind of substitute market taste for the individual tastes of editors. It is as if the market were giving birth to its own consciousness which then reduces the significance of the individual consciousness of editors and publishers.

Competition among publishers has always been keen. In the past it often provided an economic basis for the search for freshness, vigor, variety and originality in books. In the reprint field competition will probably tend to standardize. An instance of this is the increasing rivalry for motion picture tie-ups. One reprint house has already published at least forty-two titles which have also been sold to studios and filmed. Another house has entered the same field. No matter how inconsequential a book may be, it is certain to be reprinted in large editions if it is purchased for filming. The nadir of this trend is the current practice of publishing, in large low-priced editions, novelizations of successful films which were not originally based on novels. These books are usually ghost-written for a flat fee. The obvious

* In many instances all that small town newspaper reviewers do is either to paraphrase the book blurb or repeat what has already been written by popular New York reviewers.

conditions of sale of such novelizations demand that they be done with the greatest haste: otherwise the advantage of the movie tie-up would be lost. And it is to be remembered that the film plays were written to conform to the standards of the Hays Office Production Code. Need we guess what the quality of these novelizations is like?

The need to minimize risks will be greatest in the reprint field, where more money is invested. On the average the necessary minimum investment of the reprint publisher is likely to be a thousand or more per cent higher than that of the trade publisher. Under these circumstances it is obvious that any safe book with sales possibilities is going to be reprinted. From the standpoint of the original publishers reprint rights offer added and easy profits since they entail no risk or investment and will help reduce production costs. It follows that any book which stands a good chance of being reprinted is a better investment than one which doesn't. The reprint market offers an added and important economic reason for printing safe books.*

The necessarily feverish fight for shares in the reprint market, the size of the capital investment of reprint publishers, the relatively low profit per book all demand that they constantly acquire new titles to add to their lists. They need a steady flow of new books; they need the names of new authors; and the new books and new authors must be absolutely guaranteed for them. If such cannot be found, they will have to be made. The big printing presses cannot stop running except at the peril of bankruptcy, for overhead costs mount day after day and must be paid. In time, such factors can well push the reprint houses toward taking steps to guarantee new books and authors. Already the fact that three of the four big companies are linked with trade houses further suggests this probability. Mr. B. D. Zevin, vice-president of World Publishing Company, has predicted, according to *Tide*, that he may have difficulties in buying reprint rights from the trade houses which are linked with his competitors. Here is further testimony suggesting the same probability. Strong economic motivations exist to give weight to the practice of nursing authors along for the reprint market.

The conditions of sale of the reprint market differ from those of the trade book market. In the former, books are generally sold as pure mer-

* There is a certain qualifying factor here which must be remembered. Data and experience in publishing history prove that serious books and even great ones are usually excellent long run investments, and that they may even have value on the reprint market. This market has made short stories of all levels of competence and significance a better investment for publishers. Not only is the market for books of stories by one author thriving, but there is a large demand for short story anthologies. The reprint rights of short stories are now far from insignificant when looked at from the standpoint of profits.

chandise.* Quality and variation do not play the same role as they do in the trade market. Reprint books are, in consequence, relatively interchangeable. If one book doesn't sell in a certain area, a certain chain, then another will be put in its place. And in addition to this the demand for sentimental and cheap novels is large and fairly steady. Our social conditions, which alienate so many people, daily recreate the need for these books, just as they do the need for escape movies. It should be clear then, that there are many reasons to predicate greater standardization in books: this in turn suggests that the reprint houses will exert, directly or otherwise, a growing editorial influence on the policies of the trade houses.

Never in the history of American publishing has there been a need for authors such as that which now exists. Publishers no longer sit in offices and wait for the mailman and the literary agents to deliver manuscripts to them. They search for authors across the length and breadth of America. Hollywood has become a regular stopping-off place for publishers' representatives on the hunt for writers. A new occupation, that of the literary scout, has been created. These scouts tour the literary sandlots of America, and with contract, check and fountain pen in hand, seek to sign up promising talent just as if they were scouts for a major league baseball team.

The need for writers explains the growth of the institution known as Writers Conferences, which are conducted by an increasing number of universities all over the country. (In most instances the teachers at these conferences try to give the amateur writers the rudiments of commercial writing.) It explains the reason for the existence of so many literary prizes and fellowships offered by publishers. The general intensification of competition has induced this almost frantic search for new writers. Under these circumstances the richer publishers have the advantage merely because they can offer larger advances and bigger prizes and fellowships. One result of all this activity is to create an over-supply of literary aspirants—disillusioned housewives, grandmothers, small town *petits bourgeois*, psychopaths, old maids, business men turned into New Dealers, and sundry other types and classifications, all seeking with might and main for some way whereby they can learn to write a novel and thereby make a million dollars.

The literary agent is gaining a more important position in the mechanics of American publishing. One of the roles he performs is that of thinking up ideas for a book which he can have one of his clients write, and so get his own commission. This is but another of the ways in which the chance

* This, of course, does not apply to such reprint libraries as Oxford's World Classics and Everyman's, which are based on quality. In the past the same could be said for The Modern Library, but a study of the list of titles dropped and added in recent years indicates that its editors are gradually watering down their stock.

for various people to make a lot of money becomes the premise on which a number of books are written.

The rise of the reprint houses is having the effect, as we have seen, of strengthening the ties between Hollywood and the book business. For more than a decade films have influenced writing. Thanks to the prices it can pay, Hollywood has given a strong financial impulse to the publication of books which approximate the sentimental patterns of its films. Many writers have found it most convenient to adjust their conscience, their style and their themes to the dramaturgical conceptions of Hollywood. New ties are being formed between studio offices and reprint houses. When a reprint house publishes a book in connection with a film there can be joint publicity. This will in turn lead to book advertising and publicity which will seek to fix Hollywood conceptions about books in the public mind. It is a proven fact that if a book is filmed its sale almost automatically increases. The new reprint profits will thus help to give Hollywood a greater, if indirect, editorial influence in the book world. Already the juiciest literary prize now available is the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer prize for "The Novel of the Year," so deemed by a committee of film people and critics. This prize pays the winning author a minimum of \$100,000 and just about assures financial independence for life: and the publisher of the prize-winning novel is given a fat bonus for printing the book, presumably to make him happy. A critic who had served as one of the judges selecting a "Novel of the Year" reviewed the selection in his column. This critic, an honest man who never uses his column to exploit private grievances, is not known for either his acute intelligence or his literary sensibilities. However, he was well aware that the "Novel of the Year" was a standardized performance. His review was on the side of explanation and apology, showing that while it was not like really good novels, it was a Hollywood story.

IV

I have already mentioned that the direction now being taken by the big publishers has been described as the Hollywoodization of literature. One editor and poet is of the opinion that the film and the printed word are fighting a life and death struggle, and that the film is likely to destroy the printed word. Just as some years ago there were many poets and literary men prepared to bury humane letters as a corpse slaughtered by science, so now there are writers, poets and even editors who are ready to deliver the funeral orations over the novel, that great and beautiful lady who has been killed by a camera. While this rush for the mourner's bench goes on, it is necessary to look into the question a little further. The recent expansion of the reprint market offers us some interesting data.

To date the reprint publishers have not practiced an economic censorship such as that which exists in pictures and radio. The taste shown in reprint titles reflects the general level of taste in the trade publishing world. The reprint houses have bought as many titles as they could which promised to be successful on the mass market. There is one instance of an almost forgotten but seriously written realistic novel which had had a very small original sale, was reprinted, and then sold in a very large edition. There are instances of protests from chain store buyers concerning the alleged immorality of serious novels in which the publishers did not heed these protests. One publisher took the position that he had no right to censor any book which had received critical recognition and for which there existed a popular demand. There are instances in which serious novels were kept in stock by reprint houses even though paper was scarce and this meant the temporary sacrifice of sentimental books. (However, these serious novels *were* selling well.) Reprint titles in recent years show considerable variety, especially in fiction; the variety is less wide in non-fiction titles.

A mass audience, large for the book business if not for films, has shown that it is receptive to serious titles. For instance, Richard Wright's book *Uncle Tom's Children* sold heavily in a 49¢ edition, even in the South. Inasmuch as the reprint audience includes a considerable number of those who also compose the motion picture audience we have here an excellent basis for drawing comparisons. It is now easier to examine contrasts between the quality of the novel as it is written today and as it was in the past, and the film as it is made today. The opportunity now exists for large sections of the public to see a picture and then to procure the novel on which it was based in a low-priced edition. The differences in treatment between films and novels, the greater freedom of the novelist over the scenarist often offers so glaring a contrast that it is difficult not to perceive it. These differences and contrasts offer an excellent basis for analysis, for exposing the emptiness, the shabbiness of so many Hollywood films.*

Theoretically the film and the novel should complement one another. Insofar as they are placed in competition it is artificially imposed because of the social organization of culture in American society. However even in this artificially imposed competition the novelist is less at a disadvantage

* The case of the film *To Have and Have Not*, based on Ernest Hemingway's novel of the same title, is illuminating here, even though the novel itself is a very bad one, far inferior to *The Sun Also Rises*. The hero, in the novel, smuggled arms for Cuban revolutionists who were fighting the terroristic Batista regime; in the film, the hero helps to win the World War by putting himself in the service of anti-Vichyites. Cuba becomes Martinique. Changes of this kind were made not for any artistic reasons at all, but for purely immediate political ones. At the same time, the relationship between the hero and the heroine becomes utterly senseless. The reason for this is the Hays Code. Immediate practical needs, plus the Code, also demanded other changes and disfigurements of the novel. However, it can be added that in the case of another book, *The Informer*, the film is far superior to the novel.

than many people assume. He is more free than the screen writer. He may dare to say in public what even the most powerful motion picture magnate dares not whisper. In artificially imposed competition in the arts, money is not the only decisive factor. Freedom of expression is also decisive. In the long run he who is most free is sure to have the most important influence.

There are many forms of literature which have little or no connection with films—essays, most of the good poetry that is written, and such works as *Finnegans Wake*. There are many novels, however, which do stand in relationship with the film, the sentimental popular novel and the realistic novel being leading instances. In the case of the former the influence of the films is the strongest. But not so in the case of the latter. Novels form part of the raw material for films. The serious realistic novelist is able to explore social conditions more all-sidedly than the film writer: he has greater freedom in the use of dialogue; he can seek to grasp and use more penetrating psychological insights. Thus he is able to develop his talents more fully than the screen writer. His work is closer to the problems, the feelings, the needs of people. The film writer and the film apologist have to pretend that films are as free and as close to real needs and problems as is the serious novel. But this pretense is empty. The studios can buy talent and knowledge; but with a purchase price they cannot produce a serious work of art which will manifest its influence long after it is presented to the public. When we see many of even the best films of the past we consider them dated; we even laugh at their naiveté. But the best novels of the past retain their interest, and often they seem contemporary with the present. The healthier influence at work in the mutual relationships between films and novels is that which serious novels exert on films. It is likely to have a more lasting influence than that manifested by the Hollywood film on the novel. The serious novel is potentially a standing example which exposes the emptiness of most of the apologies made in the name of Hollywood films.

Not because of artistic needs but because of business interests and self-imposed "discipline," the film again and again must reduce, disfigure and alter the contents of novels. The situation in Hollywood is such that the past is recreated according to naive fantasies of the present. An instance of this is the film *The Adventures of Mark Twain*, a banal picture showing us an actor made up to look like Twain. There are a few events in the picture which are like those in the life of Mark Twain. The similarity ends just about there. Certainly so long as Hollywood continues to produce the films it does the serious writer need not have the slightest fear concerning the artificially imposed competition between the picture and the novel. The real advantages are all on his side. And insofar as he is placed in competition with Hollywood he doesn't compete with the screen writer. His work can

even help the screen writer in the latter's struggles with his producers. The center of this induced competition is between the serious writer and the studio owners and executives. When his work exposes the shallowness of films it hits at the companies' interests, not at that of the scenarists. The best of the screen writers will try to write more freely on any and every occasion when they are given the least opportunity to do so.

In general, concerning this mutual relationship between films and novels, there is much irrelevant rationalization. This question must be explored further because Hollywood plays a peculiar role in American life.

V

The role of Hollywood—and also of the radio—in American life reveals a contradiction which has only the most irregular application in the book business. If we look at the arts of the film, the radio and the novel in terms of the problems of capitalism and culture, we will see that important differences must be noted. These differences should warn us against making arbitrary analogies. In the case of radio and the film, a major contradiction produced by capitalist economy arises between commodity sales pressure and the needs of art. In a society based on commodity production works of art become commodities. But this does not, of itself, produce the contradiction of which I am speaking.

Most radio art is sponsored by commodity producers. A major example is the soap opera, whose reason for being is advertising. Used as a mere sales come-on, this form of art is terribly censored. The hired writer of soap operas must invent, devise, contrive in any way that permits him to interest and flatter the largest possible number of people. His dramaturgical problems are artificially created by this necessity. He must make no character unpleasant if any section of his audience is likely to associate itself with that character, for these people may possibly be offended. Then they will not buy the brand of soap manufactured by the company which is sponsoring this work. The need to sell a commodity directly intervenes in the process of producing a work of popular art and it has a number of deforming consequences. It practically demands that art be turned into wholesale flattery. Here then is a direct instance of what I mean by the commodity-versus-art contradiction.

In a more indirect way it interferes with motion picture writing. The Production Code of the Motion Picture Industry states: "The history, institutions, prominent people and citizenry of other nations shall be represented fairly." The real reason for this provision is that foreign trade is important to the film industry. If a film disturbs a foreign government it can be banned. And lest we forget, in the days when Hollywood was not

as anti-fascist as it recently was, it feared to produce anti-fascist films.* The late Benjamin Boles Hampton indicated years ago in *A History of Movies* that a few Hollywood persons were not blind to the connection between films and the sale of commodities. He pointed out the role of American films abroad in increasing the demand for American products. Some Hollywood people have at times denied this, but the fact is indisputable. Professor Raymond Moley, in his recent book *The Hays Office*, explicitly admitted this fact by stating that a major cause for resentment of American films abroad and for a demand that their import be restricted was because these films disturb foreign manufacturers. They create a demand for American goods rather than the home-produced brands which are often inferior. Hampton's explanation of the success of the De Mille spectacle movie is relevant. After the First World War America had a rich upper and middle class with an increased budget to be spent on social life, on parties, entertainments, decorations and consumer goods in general. Spectacle movies appealed to the consumption and leisure needs and desires of this group, especially the women in it; and according to Hampton these same pictures also helped to teach them how to buy, how to entertain and to give parties. For years the American motion picture has exerted a tremendous influence on tastes in personal appearance, in hair dressing, female clothes and such matters. Its strongest emphasis in the overwhelming majority of pictures is on leisure, on personal life. Indirectly it helps to create wants, giving new or changed tastes to people which cause them to want to buy things.† Then too, America is ringed with cartels, trade

* A large motion picture studio purchased the film rights of Sinclair Lewis' novel *It Can't Happen Here* and then did not dare to produce a film based on the book.

† Miss Barbara Deming, a film analyst and critic, has observed a change in the pattern of the movie dream. (Cf. her articles, "Exposition of a Method," in the magazine *Chimera* for Winter and Spring, 1944.) She writes: ". . . film after film is obedient to a compulsion to clear of any serious censure the big money man, the big breadwinner. The rich household is fumed against, but the kingpin of the household is not. Censure of the idle rich, but not of the rich who work for their money, is of course in the Puritan tradition. And it is in this tradition for the millionaire to be identified, as so frequently he is in these films, with the common man. For is he not just that—the common man who has fulfilled himself, who has scaled the ladder of success, who has made good. The successful breadwinner cannot be censured if there is to be a Horatio Alger myth." However, she observes, citing many examples, that the Horatio Alger myth is being unrolled backward. The successful Horatio Alger seeks to retain the common touch, to express a nostalgia for the days when he was just a common man. This implies—and often explicitly presents—a mood in which America as the paradise of commodities is not enough to satisfy the individual. This new emphasis in pictures is related to the New Deal climate in culture, with its verbal flattery of the common man, the "forgotten man." (Here it should not be overlooked that the phrase was taken from Sumner and that Sumner's "forgotten man" was the man of the middle class.) Also it is related to the War. War needs, war sacrifices, war shortages rendered untenable the film in which America is a paradise of Horatio Algers with leisure and all of the commodities which go with the life of leisure and success. A "People's War" tended to dictate a film in which the common man, his taste, his essential humanity triumphed over that of the rich, the snobbish.

associations, occupational associations, which are jealous guardians of the value of the products and the dignity of the occupations of their members. If anything in a film disturbs these associations or its members there is usually a protest. The pressure applied by these organizations causes Hollywood to exert the utmost care about how objects are used as film properties, and similarly the types of villains which it may employ are severely restricted.* Let us take a hypothetical case: suppose that the demands of a film story were such that the villain had to be an undertaker. It is fairly certain that the undertakers of America would be on the neck of the studio which produced such a film.†

The pressure of commodity producers, sellers, and of those who sell special kinds of services, is almost as strong as that of those religious groups which guard the soul of humanity. Hollywood films reflect and relate to

During the War some film executives spoke of the new growth of social consciousness in films and promised—almost vowed—to produce films that would educate for peace and democracy. This line has shifted, and some of them speak of the film as a means of healing conflicts. A fairly recent film, *Practically Yours*, laughs at the modern home full of the newest commodities. The man who wants this is a clerk; the hero is a war hero. The girl wants the vigorous war hero, not the clerk who is going to give her a home with the latest in refrigerators and such commodities. But now with the War over and with the economic need of America that of a booming and prosperous consumer market, we can expect further changes in the movie dream. Finally, the observations of Parker Tyler on love in his suggestive book *The Hollywood Hallucination* (New York, 1944) are, in the main, consistent with those of Miss Deming. The book is to be recommended along with her articles.

* Gangsters make excellent villains, but gangster pictures sometimes bring down the social workers and pastors on the studios because of the juvenile delinquency problem. Germans and Japanese served during the War as excellent villains, but now War films—like War stories in slick magazines—are passé. Lunatics offer excellent possibilities, however, because there is no existent Professional Association of the Lunatics of America which could protest over a film casting indignity on their special occupation. Under these conditions the endless repetition of the old story of the boy who meets the girl is an easy solution of the problem. All the world loves a lover, and lovers are too busy with love to form a Cartel of Lovers of the World which would jealously protect the way in which the lover is represented on the screen.

† Professor Raymond Moley in *The Hays Office* (New York, 1945) gives real examples of this pressure. "The depiction of James Cagney as an honest, capable and competent employee in the Department of Weights and Measures . . . (in *The Great Guy*) was the signal for vehement outcries from retail grocers and gas station owners who insisted that the picture 'cast a reflection on their honesty' . . . A comedy showing the troubles of a householder with his coal furnace and ending with his decision to buy an oil burner infuriated anthracite coal producers . . . not to mention furnace makers and distributors. . . . The casual line of a popular star—"They say white bread is not good for you"—brought literally thousands of angry letters from millers, bakers, grain-elevator men and farm organizations. . . . Heroes and heroines used to set sail for foreign parts on inferentially identified foreign ships [which] brought legitimate protests from all American shipping lines." Moley also cites an instance in which Atlantic City hotel men and businessmen protested about pictures in which characters brought their secretaries instead of their wives to that resort, and asked that once in a while in a picture a wife instead of a secretary be taken to Atlantic City. Moley comments: "Such are the fruits of inadvertent references to services, commodities, and products." He also says that the communications of the Production Code Administration to studios are filled with references concerning these matters.

every important vested economic, political and moral interest in American life. Given our economic and social structure, Hollywood is understandably fearful of these interests. However no decent conception of art asks that art and the artist be the servant of commodity production in this sense. The artist is an artist, not a salesman. To continue, the scale of picture investments demands that films have the widest possible audience, the largest possible measure of good will. As a result, the film studios will rarely oppose strong pressure; they bend to it. Hollywood censors itself and boasts of this "self-discipline." The consequences to the film as an art are drastic. Like his fellow writer in radio, the screen writer has to meet artificially imposed problems which relate to commodity production as such, and not to art as such.

VI

The contradiction between commodity sales pressure and the needs of art has not yet intervened seriously in the book world, although there are instances of it in the magazine and newspaper business. In magazines we can see many connections between the commodity and the story. In more than one slick magazine there is often a certain synchronization between the stories, the illustrations showing characters in the stories, and a number of the advertisements in the same magazine. *The New Yorker*, an ultra-sophisticated magazine, prints many stories about the sophisticated New Yorker while its advertisements often show us sophisticated types in sophisticated homes who buy consumer goods which are the last word in sophistication.* In book publishing this does not yet apply except in rare instances.

The absence of this kind of pressure is one of the reasons why the freest means of communication in America has been found in the book. It is possible, in book form, to pose questions sharply and seriously; it is possible to try to think things through even to the end. In works of literary art the writer may feel very free in his choice of subject matter and his method of treatment.† And the record of publishers in defense of free

* For some interesting and suggestive remarks on *The New Yorker* see "The New York Wits" by Herbert Marshall McLuhan in *The Kenyon Review* for Winter, 1945.

† There are, of course, frequent instances of editors' and publishers' trying to tamper with manuscripts, and authors have had many difficulties in this respect. There are counter-instances where authors have never had to face this problem. I personally have never had this kind of trouble except occasionally with magazines. In one such instance the editor of a "left" magazine tried to persuade me to delete some mildly teasing remarks directed against a capitalist publisher. Even when publishers or editors do try to get an author to change his writing for sales reasons, or because of fear of pressures, the author is not bound to do so. If a publisher changes a manuscript without an author's permission the writer can publicly denounce the publisher and sue him. If a publisher refuses to print a book unless changes are made the writer does have a chance to try to interest some other publisher. In many cases writers willingly

speech in the courts is, on the whole, far, far better than is that of other cultural entrepreneurs. The business of the publisher is to sell a book. His commodity is one which contains ideas and artistic representations. His investment is significantly lower than that of many merchants, and up to the present, his market has been relatively limited. In terms of the total investment structure of our American economy the money invested in publishing houses is very small. Even now that publishing is becoming big business its investment is still much less than that of one of the big American industries. Factors such as these have created economic conditions which made liberalism economically feasible in book publishing. Publishers have been more or less willing to print any kind of book which will sell enough copies to give them some chance of making a profit. And the relative smallness of financial risk has often permitted publishers to print books which stood only a slight chance of returning their original investments. The prestige gained from publishing good books is of real value to a publisher. In non-fictional books there is an almost complete freedom of expression concerning all ideas and trends which exist within a bourgeois perspective. Even revolutionary books are published. Trade publishers have printed works of Marx and Trotsky, books which threaten the entire class of which the publisher is a member.* Publishers have nursed along serious literary

agree to changes which will enhance sales values, and in others they have not taken action publicly on changes made over their heads but have complained and griped privately. The situation is often confused in the public mind because of undue griping. Besides the question of changes prompted by the desire to make money or through fear of pressure, there is the problem of editing. Many writers, even good ones, need editorial help. Often there are conflicts and differences which are merely editorial in character. Then there is the problem of legal censorship. It is shameful for a serious author to accept economic censorship so that he can make a lot of money, and then to represent himself as a serious writer to the public. Legal censorship is another matter, and it is a practical question to be decided on the circumstances of each case. Artistic and intellectual honor do not demand that one say everything in all instances; it only demands that in each case one say all that is necessary and that one do not lie. If what one has to say is of great importance and there is a clear-cut probability that the police power of society will be applied to prevent one from saying it, then there is nothing unprincipled in making a partial statement. There are cases where authors have been abused by publishers and editors, but the common myths that all publishers always do this to authors is not true, and the facts compel one to say so. Much more common than conflicts over content are those between publishers and writers concerning money and business. These sometimes involve equity and more often they relate to the sums of money spent in advertising and exploiting a book. This is not our concern here.

* Leon Trotsky's unfinished book *Stalin* was printed and sent out to reviewers by a well known publishing house. Then changes in the world situation resulted in pressure which caused the publishers to ask that all review copies be returned; the book was locked up. The jacket blurb of this book described it as a scientific contribution to historiography. A couple of weeks after this blurb was prepared the book became not science but something which would hurt the feelings of America's Soviet ally, and that would endanger international relationships. The irony of this situation is further suggested in the fact that Trotsky's widow protested against the publication of the book as it had been prepared because she believed that the editing of it had misrepresented Trotsky's political views. She either sued or threatened

artists for considerable periods until a demand for their books was created that finally made their publication profitable. In general, the publishers have sold books to a market which includes the most serious, the most disinterested, the most educated, the most cultivated people in America. Quality is one of the demands in the market of the trade publishers. Most book buyers do not become disturbed if a book happens to cast real or alleged aspersions on a particular cake of soap. Some of them are not disturbed if a novel happens to portray unpleasantly a member of their own profession or occupation. To date, the book business has occupied a less important role in American economy than do the radio and the film. This above all else explains the absence of the contradiction between the commodity and art in book publishing, or its purely secondary role when it does appear.

The problems involved in a study of art under capitalism are highly complicated. We will only misconstrue these problems if we approach them merely from the standpoint of the general class interest of a particular cultural entrepreneur. The general class interests of capitalists as a whole do not always coincide with the particular interests of particular capitalists. This is often peculiarly the case with publishers. During the War many publishers were constantly seeking books which would have a direct bearing on war aims and which would help to build morale. One publisher proposed that no books in any way critical of the Soviet Union be printed. Doubleday Doran printed Jean Malaquais' *War Diary*, a book which most certainly could have had no value in advancing war aims. During the early Thirties many publishers competed with each other in seeking leftist books, both novels and political writings. It is necessary to emphasize that each individual capitalist is vitally concerned with his own market.

As I have already noted, the market of the trade publishers is highly selective and includes many discriminating people. If a publisher can stay in business and supply this market with what it wants or will take, he is generally free of the fear of pressure groups and of trade associations. The character of his business, the nature of his commodity, his market—these and similar factors all work so that up to now this contradiction between the commodity and art has not intervened in the book business as it has in radio and motion pictures. A number of years ago one of the phenomenal best sellers in America, both in trade and reprint editions, was *100,000,000 Guinea Pigs*. Many of the important commodity producers in America were up in arms about this book. Nevertheless it was sold widely, although

to sue to prevent publication, but according to the press the publishers insisted that they would be within their contract rights in publishing it with the editing to which Madame Trotsky objected. However, this instance of suppression is due to particular political causes at a particular time, and not to economic reasons.

I have heard that there were instances of individual chains which refused to handle reprints of it. A little later another best-seller was Ferdinand Lundberg's *America's Sixty Families*. Reprint bidding for this book was not as high as it has been for many others, but it *was* reprinted and sold, although it attacked the major financial vested interests of America. To date I know of no serious pressures applied in the reprint business to threaten this freedom.

However, there are certain implications in contemporary publishing which need here to be mentioned in this connection. It is possible that there may be changes in the future. Heretofore the majority of publishers have been independent merchants. We have seen how they are free of pressures of certain kinds. But now publishing is becoming bigger, and there are some houses capitalized at over a million dollars which do a huge volume of business. If with the growth of publishing the financial interests of important publishers become diffused so that publishing is but one of their interests, then the publishing business will tend to be more like other large industries. In the long run it seems likely that publishers with diverse interests of consequence in the structure of American economy *will* sooner or later begin to apply a form of economic censorship in their publishing houses. This danger is the important point to remember too, if Wall Street becomes seriously interested in the book business. If such a thing happens Wall Street control will mean that Money, Pure Money, becomes the boss. In other words, there will be absentee ownership. Such a development will be serious for the freedom of American culture and, as *Tide* indicated, it is not to be excluded as a possibility. This step would have a tremendous effect in further centralizing the book business. Another possibility is that in the next depression one of the reprint houses may go bankrupt because of over-expansion. Should this happen it is likely that the organization would be retained and the creditor banks would become the owners.*

Another centralizing tendency should also be considered. Mail order houses and chain stores are now among the largest reprint wholesale book buyers in America. It would indeed be a coincidence if chain buyers should also be men of culture with some experience in books.† Besides the role that this situation will play in effecting a greater standardization of books,

* Last summer the Atlas Corporation, a large investment trust, was reported to have bought *Liberty Magazine* (and other magazines in the same chain) for the sum of \$2,000,000. This, to my knowledge, is the first instance of a magazine being owned by a holding company.

† Mr. Walgreen of the Walgreen Drug Stores is decidedly a man who is aware of culture. Some years ago his protests about the alleged teaching of Communism at the University of Chicago resulted in a legislative investigation of the faculty and particularly of Professors Robert Morss Lovett and Frederick L. Schuman. After this Mr. Walgreen's interest in culture deepened and he made a bequest to the University. Out of the money he gave books are even now being published.

it makes it possible for chain store buyers and executives to become secondary economic censors. Whenever customers or others protest certain books sold by chain stores and mail order houses, it is likely that the objectionable books will be dropped from sale. Inasmuch as these concerns buy so many books it is quite possible that their refusal to stock certain titles can drive these books out of reprint editions. As I have already stated, this has not happened often yet. And a factor militating against this possibility is that the reprint houses have a variety of outlets. But the enlarged role of chain stores is another instance of how centralization and expansion of the book business gradually achieves the effect of linking it more closely into the structure of the whole American economy.

The principal dangers of centralization in the book business lie in this direction. And if the contradiction between the commodity and art does seriously intervene in writing, it is most likely that it will come as a result of this kind of centralization. For when the book business becomes more intimately involved in the general structure of American capitalist economy, the general interests of the capitalists as a class will supersede the specific interests of the individual publishers. Then these interests will dictate to the big companies. The pressure of these big holding companies on the large publishers will be all the greater as a result.

VII

The publishing business enters the era of bigness at a higher level of culture than was the case with radio or motion pictures. This contrast is suggestive. As we know, among the original film entrepreneurs there were many fly-by-night characters and types. Others who have risen in the industry were salesmen, haberdashers, theatre owners and so on. Some of them have more than proven themselves to be men of force in business. But they were not men of culture. It is no secret that many of them treated this potentially powerful artistic medium no differently than they did the ties and other articles which some of them sold in little stores. The motion picture was a novelty. Its development surprised many of its leading figures. Its effects on audiences are immediate, vivid, magical. The very magic of the motion picture often tends to lull one's mind, to keep one fascinated and interested, even though there is no substance to what one sees. Developing from the ground up, there were no available bases of contrast of accomplishment by which films could be tested. Even today we do not have easily available standards for judging films. It is not too easy to see old films and to compare them with newer ones. Conversely, the great culture of the ages is preserved in book form. In ideas, in social thought, in creative writing, some of the peaks of human achievement are

easily accessible to all who wish to read. Our culture, our habits of reading and feeling, the values by which men live have been crystallized in books. The film industry has not only pulled itself up by its own bootstraps (a fact which is still quite obvious in the rawness of most of its products), but it has managed to become a virtual monopoly as well. It has almost complete control of the sources of production in America. It is not difficult to limit what can and cannot be said in a film. The Production Code, for instance, is easily administered. Under these circumstances the human need for variety in art is not and cannot be satisfied in films. Films have conditioned a mass audience without providing the variety to satisfy it. On the other hand, book readers have been habituated to variety. And as the number of book readers increases this possibility of variety is at least accessible to new book readers. These facts are important. Any copy writer can claim that a cheap book is a work of genius; any book reviewer can write a critical piece which reads like an advertisement. But to make such claims stick is another matter. An interested reader can always test a book by many comparisons.

The high levels of literary culture developed in periods of the past constitute a kind of good will for publishers. They can draw on it, and they can reprint and sell books which have attained a major significance in the history of human culture. There is a need for, an interest in, a demand for such books. We can see this in the reprint market. At various times reprints of Plato and Spinoza have been popular. The greatest reprint library in existence is probably Everyman's, and its titles include a large proportion of the major literary and scientific works of the ages. The Modern Library, less broad than Everyman's, is also an important reprint library. It, however, is sometimes watered down by such books as the works of Dashjell Hammett which are, at most, a little bit less than classics of the ages. At the same time that the reprint publishers compete for a new, wide and uneducated mass market, they are also reaching a smaller but important market which is made up of people who want to buy good books at cheap prices. Even though the reprint business should become completely centralized, book taste could never become as standardized as it is in films. And whereas in films a picture based on Shakespeare will be something other than the work of Shakespeare, such will not be the case in reprints. Before absolute standardization could ever be attained in the reprint market it would be necessary that several full generations of Americans be absolutely moronized. Actually, taste has progressed in America. More honest books sell in larger numbers than was the case a few decades ago. Many readers demand a greater seriousness from novelists today than they did several decades ago. Far more people of the lower middle class and even workers are reading seriously than, say, in 1890. I doubt that anyone

will conscientiously dispute this. The progress in taste has been along democratic lines, a trend suggested by the fact that with ever greater frequency the more vigorous American writers are of plebeian origin, and that writers of the upper classes try to imitate them. The serious readers are not as homogeneous as they used to be when New England culture dominated America. Also, to take another instance of a rise in taste, the publication of *Finnegans Wake* by a trade publisher would have been unthinkable in 1925. But this absolute progress in taste does not justify commercialized culture in America. For a commercialized culture is impeding a *more rapid* growth in taste. My remarks on Hollywood in this essay reveal how this is happening.* In consequence of this we are arriving at a situation in which there is likely to be a growing eagerness on the part of a large number of better books while there is an increased tendency toward standardization of taste on the part of the larger publishers.

No merchant or manufacturer can ignore his market. In a footnote above I have cited Miss Barbara Deming's article, "Exposition of a Method." Miss Deming points out how increasingly necessary it has become for films to pay heed to the "common man," that is to their audience, and how in recent years films have gravitated "toward the subject of the sins against others that result from commercialism." Movies constantly try to create a celluloid dream which wishes away this sense of guilt. The guilt of commercialism, the inner doubts that seethe beneath the surface in American capitalist society, cannot be neglected in any consideration of the problems that interest us here. Commercialization, standardization, "bigness" in the book business are running head on into a changing America. Those who sell books to a mass market will meet with this counter-force. One of the complexities of merchandizing cultural works for a mass market lies in the fact that the masses cannot really be ignored. Even though they continue to present stupid reveries the movies have had to change the patterns of their formula. This feature of a mass market for culture emphasizes the need for a large cultural entrepreneur to preserve to a certain degree a neutrality on many subjects and issues. At the present moment no reprint publisher—even in the unlikely assumption that they could wish to do so—would dare to publish a viciously anti-strike and anti-trade union book at twenty-five cents. Hollywood would not dare to produce a film of such character. Too many of those who concede in advance that taste will be utterly stupefied always seem to think of the power of big business; they never see the limits of its consumer market in culture. And there are such limits. Hollywood is at least formally neutral on many issues, and it often

* In my book *The League of Frightened Philistines*, New York, 1945, and in the article "Some Observations on the Communications Revolution," *Bulletin of the National Theatre Conference*, I have attempted to deal with various aspects of these problems.

reveals its neutrality by not dealing with these issues. Publishers also, as a whole, show a relative neutrality on various issues and types of books, a neutrality which varies in accordance with what is happening in society. This relative and varying neutrality is of considerable importance for all who are concerned with freedom of expression. It is directly connected with the fact that we can still write most freely in America in book form. And we note that, to date, the reprint houses have also shown a relative neutrality. There is a tendency in motion that leads toward standardization. But it is evolving more slowly than many alarmed persons assume. And I think we cannot arbitrarily predict that future developments in the book business will be nothing more than a mere carbon copy repeating what has happened in the case of motion pictures. Above all else we can say that so far the basic policy of the book business, both in the regular and the reprint houses, has been based on this relative neutrality. And because publishing rests on a relatively higher cultural level, the areas of publishing neutrality are much wider than those of film studio neutrality. This relative neutrality does not conflict with the business interests of many publishers because of the many variations in tastes, interests, and inclinations in their market.

True, in the last analysis the *market* dictates, and this applies to the book market as well as to others. But the book market is not a homogeneous lump. It is composed of live human beings, and they have many needs, desires, interests and inclinations. The variation in tastes in books is bound to be greater than that for hair oils or hand lotions. When the book market dictates, people want something. Their book wants are more variegated than their demands in the way of shoes. The market can be influenced by pressures, sales campaigns, publicity; but it cannot be totally controlled by these methods.* The book market is itself fluctuating. Its fluctuations are psychological as well as economic. There is nothing in the present situation which permits the assumption that it can be *absolutely* hardened. Nothing less than total police tyranny is likely to effect total hardening of the book market. And that is a political question outside of the boundaries of my article; suffice it to say that it is far too soon to write of the possibilities of freedom in the world.

Up to the present there has been no serious competition between the reprint and the trade publishers. In the main the former are opening up a

* There are, for instance, a number of book buyers in America who could by no methods whatsoever be advertised into making detective stories their major literary fare. There are others who could not despite all publicity be inveigled into joining Book Clubs. Frequently those who concede that commercialized culture has already won the day are mere snobs, and they assume that many others will never have as high a seriousness about culture as they themselves have attained. Among such people are a few of the most abysmally insensitive intellectuals now on the loose in America.

new book market. As we have seen, they are printing any kind of book which they can sell. Competition is becoming more feverish, and we are seeing a new growth of centralizing tendencies. But this is not wholly new in publishing. Doubleday Doran & Co. existed precisely as it now does before the War. Then too the reprint houses were also centralized. The irreversibility of these facts, however, does not as yet assure us as to what their final consequences will be. In other words, the degree of extension of centralizing tendencies is still problematical. The limits of the book market are unknown. It can be saturated. It expanded during the War at a period when many consumer goods were scarce, when studios were restricted in the number of new films they could produce, when gas rationing limited pleasure driving, and when other factors helped to put books in wide demand. If the expectations of the more optimistic reprint firms are realized, the mass market for books will approximate that of films. Books will even be sold in slot machines in motion picture theatre lobbies. Others enthusiastically predict that the day will come when authors are hired by reprint houses as they are now by Hollywood. They even hail this idea, assuming that a mass market for books will effect a stupendous rise in levels of taste, and that in consequence the writer will, even when hired, be able to write "his own stuff." If the publishers win a market as large as that of the films, then, under capitalism, these centralizing tendencies will become more pronounced. The area of literary freedom will become narrowed, bottle-necked. The serious writer will be pressed into his bohemia, that cultural ghetto of bourgeois society. The capital investment in books would rise; the banks would undoubtedly become partial owners of the book business. And then if, in addition, America could turn its entire educational system into a means of progressive moronization, all this and more might happen. This we grant.

But it is too soon to accept these predictions, or to find their roots in actuality. While American industry has produced the greatest mass production system in history, and while many commodities have been correspondingly standardized, the standardization and centralization of industry and commodity production as a whole has been uneven and irregular. Standardization and centralization proceed unevenly in those fields where there is the most profit. To date it has not destroyed the quality markets. In consumer industry after consumer industry we find the existence of both quality and quantity markets. The book market has in the main been a quality market. That a quality market in books will remain is certain. It remains to be proven that a book trust can produce books for a quality market by standardizing the methods it uses in the production of books for a quantity market. In the case of Doubleday Doran & Co., we can see that their trade policies have not been essentially different from those of

the small independent publishers. At the moment, and in the immediate future, the independent publishers are not threatened. We have indicated that the initial cost of investment in starting a publishing house has risen. But this is a fluctuating factor. And even with this rise the sum of money needed for the establishment of a new publishing house is small in the total picture of American economy. At the same time that the reprint houses have prospered in the war boom, quality publications have likewise flourished. The New Directions Press is one instance of this; another is Pantheon Books, which has gained a foothold after starting into business only recently. The conditions for the publication and exploitation of new and serious authors have not changed. A mass production publishing house cannot give the time and the attention, and it cannot wait long enough for a return of investment, to exploit a new and serious author by mass production methods.

The emphasis on quantity in the reprint field will limit quality there. But quality will remain, and in culture officialization and standardization inevitably produce their own anaesthesia. If culture grows too far from the needs, the feelings, and the problems of people, it will rot. There is a profound historical truth in Lincoln's statement that you cannot fool all of the people all of the time. Culture is highly sensitive to the tensions and class struggles which exist in society. With the next depression there will be changes in the subject matter of books. Then many books will be serious, deadly serious. For a culture based on commodity production to be eternal, that system must itself become eternal. Capitalists themselves are now less than absolutely convinced that their system is eternal. There is no vista of endless prosperity ahead of us, with markets that never contract. And I have already remarked that in a mass market you meet the masses, as it were, face to face. The War has given the masses of the world an education which is almost unparalleled in history. The conclusions concerning this education are far from drawn. But the increased awareness of serious problems existent in the world is more clear than it ever was. With this the need for greater knowledge, and hence for greater culture, has been touched. If you once touch this sleeping need in masses of people the consequences are far from predictable. In creating the conditions of communication which make the creation of a mass democratic culture practical, capitalist society has created a problem which it cannot ultimately solve.

The real starting point of an analysis such as this one must be human needs. The actual and potential cultural and intellectual needs of masses of people cannot and will not be permanently satisfied by standardized ideas and works of art. This can be stated as a positive fact. Even Hollywood realizes this. It is searching for a new idea almost as frantically as

the treasure hunters of Washington D.C.—the planners, New Dealers, and politicians—are looking for sixty million jobs.

Briefly then, the conditions for the monopolization of the printed word are not easily created. The big publishing companies may gain access to and control over important printing and distributing facilities, and to that degree they may achieve centralization. But this will not eliminate the possibility of printing books. To paraphrase Emerson, once an idea is let loose in the world no one knows what will happen. The book business develops toward centralization at a time when many ideas have long been loose in the world. And some of these ideas on the loose even get into reprinted books. Mass production standards are not and never can be substituted for ideas and for genuine art. For these latter flow out of the needs of the people, out of the problems and pressures of life. In turn they produce the need for variety, the need for differentiations. The most likely possibility is that for some time to come there may be a growing centralization in the book business and with this the greater separation of quantity and quality. But quality slowly and subtly will continue to eat away the strength of quantity. We can forecast this on the basis of analyses such as that given earlier on the relationships between the novel and the Hollywood film.

A cultural renaissance is unpredictable. Such a renaissance does not or need not flow out of great freedom and great prosperity. In many periods there is cultural depth and growth because crucial problems are felt widely and all-sidedly. When there are severe contradictions in society, when these are registered in the minds and hearts of ever-growing numbers, you have one of the kinds of situation which help to create a cultural renaissance. Witness Tsarist Russia. The depth of the problems of today, the growing consciousness of their meaning—these facts and conditions may yet help to condition a cultural renaissance in America. In these United States all of the conditions for cultural growth exist. The technical means for the creation of the most widespread culture in history have been perfected. On the one hand cultural growth is impeded by the social organization of culture; on the other hand, the sleeping needs of millions for knowledge, for ideas, for culture have not been stirred. These needs will never be stirred merely by selling millions of books. These needs will be stirred by problems, by the very fact that the contradictions in our society are consciously felt. If and as these sleeping needs are slowly stirred—as I remain convinced that they will be—the social basis will be laid for a quickening of cultural energy.

These possibilities suggest that the writer has a role to play. It is well for us to remember this fact.

VIII

A number of those who now predict the doom of good writing confuse business success in literature and book sales with *influence*. They approach the problem of influence merely from the standpoint of the trade publishing business; without realizing what their premise is, they see influence purely in terms of arithmetic. Let us examine this problem.

Face to face with the publishing business, many new and gifted writers will meet with difficulties, even the most trying ones. Rarely is there an immediate market for new works of literary art. However it usually happens that most literary artists who have something to say do get published. Very frequently they are still published by the trade publishers. I doubt that many artists of weight go unpublished, even though they may earn little money, even though the circumstances of their personal life be most trying. At the present time the intense competition for new writers is so keen that trade publishers are likely to be very receptive to new writers, even to some advance-guard ones. The greatest likelihood of the immediate future is that, at the most, increased centralization in parts of the publishing business will limit the volume of sales of new writers rather than prevent their being published. But this will not be a new development. It is likely that there will be fewer publishers who will nurse a new author along for an extended period. But this tendency may be partially countered by the fact that the more intelligent independent publishers will quickly realize that the best basis on which they can maintain themselves in the face of powerfully organized and richer rivals will be by the publication of works of quality. And then too we must consider fashions and fluctuations in taste. We cannot correlate in a one-one equation the taste of the War years with the condition of the book market in these years. At home during the War there was prosperity. With prosperity there was great anxiety, and millions were overworked. These are particularly good conditions for the spread of so-called escapist literature. Periods of prosperity are not always the best periods for an advance in the levels of taste. As I have already emphasized, reading habits change because of problems. We can see this in the changes in literary and ideational tendencies in America before and immediately after the depression of 1929. With the depression there was a leftward swing of the intellectuals. Reading became more serious and so did many books and writers.

Often monetary values will influence taste more pronouncedly in periods of prosperity when economic problems sink into the background than they will in periods of crisis. It is a mistake to assume that in the immediate

future the efforts of book publishers to expand necessarily will mean that they will merely print more of the same kind of books that have been printed in the past. The pressures of war, the fear of expression felt by so many during the War, are now of the past. There is now a new generation ready to begin writing. And many in the older generation are almost throbbing with the desire, if not the capacity, to try now to say much that was left unsaid during the War. There is possibly a real symptomatic significance in the recent autobiography, *Raw Material*, by Oliver La Farge.* There La Farge confesses that for years he had been an escapist writer, writing the same love story with variations. He stated that he had developed a formula which usually permitted him to sell stories at a thousand dollars a crack. He wrote: "Analysis of my writings showed that I had one theme and one fundamental love story. I had rewritten the theme from every angle; the only new treatment I could see for the love story would be to set it up between homosexuals." We can be sure that Oliver La Farge, not a writer without gifts, is not alone among escapist writers who are worn out with what they have been writing. The world of literary success is full of self-doubt; it is groggy with its own emptiness. Let me repeat: it is far from impossible that in the immediate years ahead, and especially after the next economic crisis, we will see sharp changes in writing, in literary and ideational currents. And these currents flow with some independence of the bestseller lists.

At this point it is pertinent to remind readers that the most important novel in world literature of the Twentieth Century was not first printed by the regular book publishers and that it was even confiscated by the Customs authorities. I refer to Joyce's *Ulysses*. For years this novel influenced the best of the younger generations in all of the civilized countries of the world, but it was completely outside the channels of commercial and bestseller culture. In the field of politics many of the most influential books—for instance some of the writings of Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, and Rosa Luxembourg—were published and distributed outside of the regular channels. The course of influence is not always that of business success. Literary tendencies and influences do not work precisely as do political ones. They do not need mass appeal. Their influence bears most importantly on writers, and of these, on the newer generations. A new literary tendency, a new writer of great promise, may not be recognized in the popular literary organs: he may even be unknown to the literary pundits of the day: his work may not be published by the trade publishers. And yet it may slowly and surely manifest its influence. Further, there is a difference between the aesthetic rebel and the political revolutionist. Aesthetic rebellion is

* I have discussed this book in detail in an article "The Artist in Our Time" in *Tomorrow* for October, 1945.

always more easily assimilable by bourgeois society than is revolutionary political thought. Bourgeois society, not only in America but also abroad, has successively assimilated its generations of aesthetic rebels. We can see this by merely looking at the present status of the anti-bourgeois literary artists who were the contemporaries of Karl Marx. Flaubert, Baudelaire, and Rimbaud have all been more or less assimilated: but not Marxism. The picture of the Impressionists and of Cézanne which caused such furors of Philistine indignation are now investments worth thousands of dollars. Too many of those who make dire predictions concerning the future of art because of the official and bourgeois Philistine standards of the moment have themselves a bourgeois perspective. It would be better if serious and good writers always outsold hacks. But even if they don't, it does not follow that the hacks will exert the permanent influence. By and large the literary works of the past which we read and respect, and in which we can find something that makes us feel that these works are contemporary for us, are works written by literary artists, not hacks. It is well to remember this. New writers often face terrible difficulties. But we gain little by complaining and griping over difficulties. The point is not to complain about conditions but to fight them. And in the field of writing itself, one of the means of fighting is by writers' pursuing their own bent, and by criticism, pitiless criticism. If we approach these problems in this spirit, our outlook for the future becomes different, if not always too hopeful in the economic sense. The future of art does not and never can belong to the hired artist.

"Neither a nation nor a woman can be forgiven for the unguarded hour in which a chance comer has seized the opportunity for an act of rape," wrote Karl Marx in *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. No more can the gifted writer be forgiven for the unguarded hour when he has allowed a chance literary agent, a chance Hollywood producer, a chance publisher to rape his artistic honor with a fat contract, and thereby turn him into a wretched hack. The writer need be no passive instrument. Without writers there can be no writing. No one has ever put Huxley's monkeys before a typewriter and gotten any results; no genius has invented a machine that will substitute for writers. Most predictions about the gloomy future of humane letters do not even take the writer into account. These assume that the writers will all become hacks, or else that they will be crushed. It is for the writers to answer these assumptions: this task lies on the shoulders of the young generation. Do they and will they answer that they are passive instruments? Are they prepared to let themselves be pressed and driven into literary ghettos? Instead of asking: will literature *be* standardized? let us ask: will writers *allow* themselves to be standardized? and especially in the immediate days ahead when publishing competition gives so many temporary advantages to the writer. Regardless of what the

popular reviewers say, they have worn themselves out praising fake genius; they swoon from the junk they read and like, or pretend to like. Under attack, they usually dodge, hedge, apologize. They too have their inner doubts. This is another important symptom to remember. Art, to be of weight in this world, must be of sterner stuff than what we get; and so must the artist.

In his preface to *Thérèse Raquin* Zola wrote: "The public as a whole resents having its habits changed, and the judgments which it passes have all the brutality of a death-sentence. But there comes a time when the public itself becomes an accomplice of the innovators; this is when, imbued with the new spirit, weary of the same stories repeated to it countless times, it feels an imperious desire for youth and originality." Speaking of the historical drama of his time, Zola said: "The historical drama is in its death-throes, unless something new comes to its assistance: that corpse needs new blood. It is said that the operetta and the dramatic fantasy have killed the historical drama. This is not so: the historical drama is dying a natural death, of its own extravagances, lies, and platitudes. . . . And melodrama, that bourgeois offspring of the romantic drama, is in the hearts of the people more dead than its predecessors; its false sentiment, its complications of stolen children and discovered documents, its impudent gasconades, have finally rendered it despicable, so that any attempt to revive it proves abortive. . . . But now that everything is torn down, and swords and capes rendered useless, it is time to base out works on truth. . . . There should no longer be any . . . formulas, no standards of any sort; there is only life itself, an immense field where each may study and create as he likes. . . . We must look to the future, and the future will have to do with the human problem studied in the frame-work of reality. . . . The well-known receipts for the tying and the untying of an intrigue have served their time; now we must seek a simple and broad picture of men. . . . Outside of a few scenic conventions, all that is now known as 'the science of the theatre' is merely a heap of clever tricks, a narrow tradition that serves to cramp the drama, a ready-made code of language and hackneyed situations, all known and planned beforehand, which every original worker will scorn to use."

We can repeat these words of Zola with the greatest pertinence today and apply them to the entire fields of creative literature and motion pictures. And repeating them now, we have learned much since Zola's time, much about art, about politics, about society, about history. We have seen how the Philistines of other years have raved for their little hour, and vanished. We have seen how the works they damned, and this includes both naturalistic writings and advance guard literature, have been precisely the works which have entered into the living currents of literary in-

fluence. Increasing tendencies toward centralization in publishing and the enormous influence of Hollywood cannot, singly or combined, kill living creative literature. But writers will kill it themselves if they surrender, if they passively acquiesce. It is true that we have in America a swollen commercial culture. But at the core it is empty. And we can see that it is hollow by noticing how, when serious books do have an opportunity to sell, they often maintain themselves in competition with the base products. For instance, there is the phenomenon of Richard Wright. But his example does not suggest the full situation. For the advance-guard writer and the poet do not have the same chances as does the realistic novelist. Still all serious and honestly written literature has the influence of helping the literary artist. Literary taste must be created, and this can only be done by examples, by examples of seriousness and truthfulness. In the final analysis the problems of literature and commerce will remain as long as we have a capitalist form of society. But the literary and cultural situation is a fluid one. The Hollywood film may be produced more or less on the basis of a monolithic industry. There may and most likely will be pronounced monolithic tendencies in book publishing. But the character of the industry itself, the unevenness of monolithic economic development, the great variety in tastes, cultural levels, and cultural needs produce a very fluid and complicated book market. The publishers intend to make money. They will, within this compass, have a more or less neutral attitude on what they publish. They are now competing on all sides. Their very competition gives the author a certain independence of position, vis-a-vis commercial publishing. The production and distribution of books in America may be organized in terms of the needs of the commercial book trade. But literary influences can, if with difficulty, grow even outside of this organization. Thus the writer himself has a role to play, and he has some voice.

Even though the gloomiest of predictions be fulfilled these tendencies must work out in time. And here time is of the essence. They have not worked out to their end of total standardization. The channels of serious communication in America have been narrowed in recent years, but this narrowing has occurred more in the field of ideas and political thought than it has in that of literary work. As long as channels remain open the object of the writer should be to use these channels. Viewing these problems from the standpoint of the writer who opposes the commercialization of art, we see that counter-efforts must be made to provide different examples, different types of work. The conditions of the social organization of literature are given for the writer. He does not control them. But Napoleon was fond of remarking: "Engage in battle, and see what happens." The writer must do likewise. He must engage in battle and see what hap-

pens. His battle, as a writer, is made through his effort, through his opposition to shoddy standards of writing, and thereby, through the creation of counter-examples that are not shoddy.

As these centralizing tendencies do evolve to the degree that they may, it should become increasingly clear to the writer with a conscience that his long-run interests as a human being and as an artist fail to coincide with the interests of capitalism. But this conclusion, leading the writer toward socialism, does not, in itself, give him a literary perspective. By reaching this conclusion the artist will not thereby necessarily assimilate socialism as a perspective which motivates his work. Some of these problems are problems involving the economic position of the writer, and the degree to which he desires to struggle in order that he be able to write out of his own needs, his own feelings, his own tensions and emotions, his own experiences, rather than on the basis of the fluctuations in the book market. An analysis such as this one is not directly concerned with a discussion of the problems of orientation and perspective out of which a writer develops and works according to his own bent. This problem is a separate one, and to introduce it here would be as likely to confuse as to clarify. It is best treated separately. Further, we can now see that from the standpoint of the writer the direct and immediate problem he faces is precisely the same as that which his predecessors have faced—the problem of success versus integrity. The circumstances of that problem have changed somewhat, and the attractiveness of success is greater than ever. The rewards of writing for the market are higher. In consequence, the serious writer will meet with more competition from those who see in writing merely and solely an opportunity for the big money. But greater competition does not change the problem in its essentials. For some time to come at least, this problem will remain posed for the writer as it is at the present moment. In meeting it his own decisions constitute a factor of great importance. This point cannot be over-emphasized. *The writer is an active not a passive agent in this situation.*

Long ago, when discussing the question of freedom of the writer, Karl Marx remarked: "Is a press which degrades itself to a trade free? A writer must certainly earn money in order to exist and write, but he should not exist and write in order to earn money. . . . The first freedom of the press must consist in its emancipation from commerce. The writer who degrades the press to a mere means of material livelihood deserves as a punishment for this inner slavery that outer slavery called censorship, unless his very existence is already his punishment." After quoting this, Marx's biographer Mehring stated: "All his life Marx lived up to these principles and to the same standard which he demanded from others: a man's writing must always be an end in itself. Far from being a mere means

for himself and others, he must, if necessary, sacrifice his own existence to his writing."

Marx was a great revolutionary. But creative artists have written and clung to this same principle. Tolstoy did. Joyce did. And we love the memory of these men, not only for their literary greatness but also for their artistic conscience and honor. Decidedly the time has come for writers to speak up, to assert themselves, to take a stand on the future of books. The time has come for them to say, and with scorn in their voices, that they will not be hacks. The field of the future is theirs. Year in and year out bestsellers have come and gone. Real books will not go like that. They will stay. For we know that the future of books is involved in the future of culture. And the future of culture is a not insignificant part of the future of mankind. We have not lived through the *last* mass revulsion in taste in history. We have not lived through the *last* change in history. We have not lived through the *last* revolution. Now less than ever should the literary artist surrender to the Philistines and to commerce. The future is more important for writers, for the new generation, than the bombast and glamor which so many now call culture. A half-monopolized culture can only reproduce worn-out and wretched formulas, patch them up with cellophane, and let the press agent do his job. You can saturate humanity with everything, including this sentimentality. Clear and honest work *will* stand out against such saturated sentimentality. Years ago, Zola boldly proclaimed: "The truth is on the march." That is the role of the writer—to try to make that truth march.

NOTE: Copies of this article are available for sale in pamphlet form for quantity distribution to writers and groups. Address enquiries to New Directions, 500 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

ABOVE THE CITY

JAMES LAUGHLIN

You know our office on the 18th
floor of the Salmon Tower looks
right out on the

Empire State & it just happened
we were there finishing up some
late invoices on

a new book that Saturday morning
when a bomber roared through the
mist and crashed

flames poured from the windows
into the drifting clouds & sirens
screamed down in

the streets below it was unearthly
but you know the strangest thing
we realized that

none of us were much surprised be-
cause we'd always known that those
two paragons of

progress sooner or later would per-
form before our eyes this demon-
stration of their
true relationship.

WHEN DO ANGELS CEASE TO RESEMBLE THEMSELVES?

A STUDY OF RIMBAUD

HENRY MILLER

THERE IS A passage in *A Season in Hell* (the section called "The Impossible") which seems to provide the clue to the nature of the harrowing tragedy which Rimbaud's life describes. That this is his last work—at the age of eighteen!—has a certain importance. Here his life divides evenly in two, or to look at it another way, it completes itself. Like Lucifer, Rimbaud succeeds in getting himself ejected from Heaven, the Heaven of Youth. He is vanquished not by an Archangel but by his own mother, who for him personifies authority. It is a fate which he abetted from the very beginning. The brilliant youth who possesses all talents, and who despises them, abruptly breaks his life in two. It is an act at once magnificent and horrible. Satan himself could not have devised a more cruel punishment than Arthur Rimbaud meted out to himself in his invincible pride and egotism. At the very threshold of manhood he surrenders his treasure (the genius of the creator) to "that secret instinct and power of death in us" which Amiel has described so well. The "*hydre intime*" so deforms the image of love that only defiance and impotence are discernible finally. Abandoning all hope of recovering the key to his lost innocence, Rimbaud plunges into the black pit in which the human spirit touches nadir, there to parody Krishna's words: "With this myself I establish the whole Universe, and remain for ever separate."

The passage which reveals his awareness of the issue and his choice, which is necessitous, runs as follows:

"If my spirit were always wide-awake from this moment on, we would soon arrive at the truth, which perhaps even now surrounds us with her angels, weeping! . . . If it had been awake up until now, I would not have given in to degenerate instincts, to a forgotten epoch! . . . If it had always been wide-awake, I would be sailing in full wisdom! . . ."

What it was that sealed his vision, and thereby brought about his doom, no one knows—and probably no one ever will know. His life, for all the facts at our disposal, remains as much a mystery as his genius. What we see clearly enough is that everything he prophesied about himself in the three years of illumination vouchsafed him is fulfilled in the years of wandering when he makes of himself a desert. How often in his writings appear the words desert, ennui, rage, toil! In the second half of his life these words attain a concrete significance which is devastating. He becomes everything that he predicted, everything that he was frightened of, every-

thing that he raged against. The struggle to free himself of man-made fetters, to rise above human laws, codes, conventions, superstitions leads him nowhere. He becomes the slave of his own whims and caprices, a puppet who has nothing better to do than chalk up a few more trifling crimes to his credit in the log book of his own damnation.

That he gives in at the end when his body is but "a motionless stump," as he puts it, is not to be dismissed with the sceptic's sneer. Rimbaud was the rebel incarnate. It required every known degradation and humiliation, every form of laceration, to break the stubborn will which had been perverted at the source. He was perverse, untractable, adamant—until the very last hour. Until there was no more hope. He was one of the most desperate souls that ever stalked the earth. True, he gave up from exhaustion—but not before he had traveled every wrong road. At the end, having nothing to sustain his pride any longer, having nothing to look forward to except the jaws of death, deserted by all but the sister who loved him, there is nothing to do but to scream for mercy. His soul has been vanquished, it can but surrender. Long ago he had written: "*Je est un autre.*" Now the problem of "making the soul monstrous in the manner of the comprachicoes" reaches solution. That other self which was the I abdicates. It had known a long, hard reign; it had withstood every siege only to fall apart finally and dissolve into nothingness.

"I say that you must be a Seer . . . make yourself a Seer!" he had urged at the beginning of his career. And then suddenly it is over, his career, and he has no use for literature, not even his own. Then the trek, the desert, the burden of guilt, boredom, rage, toil—and humiliation, loneliness, pain, frustration, defeat and surrender. Out of this wilderness of conflicting emotions, out of the battlefield which he has made of his own mortal body, there blossoms in the very last hour the flower of faith. How the angels must have rejoiced! Never was there a more recalcitrant spirit than this proud Prince Arthur! Let us not overlook the fact that the poet who boasted that he had inherited his idolatry and love of sacrilege from his ancestors, the Gauls, was known in school as "the dirty little bigot." It was a sobriquet which he acknowledged with pride. Always "with pride." Whether it was the hoodlum in him or the bigot, the deserter or the slave-dealer, the angel or the demon, it is always with pride that he records the fact. But in the end it is the priest who shrives him who may be said to walk off with pride. To Rimbaud's sister Isabelle he is reported to have said: "Your brother has faith, my child . . . He has faith, and I have never beheld such faith."

It is the faith of one of the most desperate souls that ever thirsted for life. It is the faith born of the last hour, the last minute—but *it is faith*. What does it matter, therefore, how long he resisted, or how defiantly and tempest-

tuously? He was not poor in spirit, he was mighty. He fought with every last ounce of strength that was in him. And that is why his name, like Lucifer's, will ever remain a glorious one, why he will be claimed by this side and that. Even his enemies claim him! We know how the monument which was erected to him in his native town of Charleville was decapitated by the Germans and carried off during the last war's invasion. How memorable, how prophetic, now seem the words which he flung at his friend Delahaye when the latter referred to the indubitable superiority of the German conquerors. "The idiots! Behind their blaring trumpets and beating drums they will return to their own country to eat sausages, believing that it is all over. But wait a little. Now they are all militarized from top to toe, and for a long time they will swallow all the rubbish of glory under treacherous masters who will never let go of them . . . I can see from now the rule of iron and madness that will imprison all of German society. And all that merely to be crushed in the end by some coalition!"

Yes, he may be claimed with equal justice by both sides. That is his glory, I repeat. It means that he embraced the darkness *and* the light. What he walked out on was the world of living death, the false world of culture and civilization. He denuded his spirit of all the artificial trappings which sustain the modern man. "*Il faut être absolument moderne!*" The "*absolument*" is important. A few sentences later he adds: "The battle of the spirit is as brutal as the battle of men; but the vision of justice is the pleasure of God alone." The implication is that we are experiencing a false modernity: with us there is no sharp and brutal combat, no heroic struggle such as the saints of old waged. The saints were strong men, he maintains, and the hermits were artists, no longer in style now, alas! Only a man who knew the meaning of temptation could speak thus. Only a man who valued discipline, the discipline which seeks to raise life to the level of art, could thus extol the holy ones.

In a sense, Rimbaud's whole life may be said to be a search for the proper discipline, one, to be sure, which would give him freedom. In the beginning, as innovator, this is obvious enough, even though one may quarrel with the sort of discipline which he imposes upon himself. In the second half of his life, when he has broken with society, the purpose of his Spartan discipline is more obscure. Is it merely to become a worldly success that he endures all those hardships and privations? I doubt it. Superficially he may seem to have no greater goal or purpose than any ambitious adventurer. That is the view of cynics, of failures who would love to have as company such a great figure as the enigmatic Rimbaud. To me it seems that he was preparing his own Calvary. Though he may not have understood it himself, his behavior comes close to resembling that of the saint struggling with his own savage nature. Blindly, perhaps, he seems to be making him-

self ready to receive the divine grace which he had rashly and ignorantly spurned in his youth. One may also say that he was digging his own grave. But it was never the grave he was interested in—he had a supreme horror of the worms. For him death had already made itself all too manifest in the French way of life. Remember his terrible words . . . “to lift with dry fist the lid of the coffin, to sit down, to suffocate. Thus, no old age at all, no dangers; terror is not French.” It was fear of this living death which made him choose the hard life; he was willing to brave every terror rather than surrender in mid-stream. What then was the purpose, the goal, of such a strenuous life? For one thing, of course, it was to explore every possible phase of life. He thought of the world as “full of magnificent places that could not be visited within the lives of a thousand men.” He demanded a world “in which his immense energy could work unhampered.” He wanted to exhaust his powers in order to realize himself absolutely. In the ultimate, however, his ambition was to arrive, even if utterly beaten and exhausted, at the frontier of some dazzling new world, a world which would bear no resemblance to the one he knew.

What other world could this be than the shining world of the spirit? Does not the soul always express itself in terms of youth? From Abyssinia, Rimbaud once wrote in despair to his mother: “We live and die by another pattern than we could ever have designed, and that without hope of any kind of compensation. We are lucky that this is the only life we shall have to live, and that that is obvious . . .” He was not *always* so certain that this is the only life. Does he not wonder, during his season in Hell, if there may be other lives? He suspects there are. And that is part of his torment. Nobody, I venture to say, knew better than the young poet that for every failed or wasted life there must be another and another and another, without end, without hope—until one sees the light and elects to live by it. Yes, the struggle of the spirit is just as sharp and cruel as the combat of battle. The saints knew it, but the modern man laughs at it. Hell is whatever, wherever, one thinks it to be. If you believe you are in Hell, you are. And life, for the modern man, has become an eternal Hell for the simple reason that he has lost all hope of attaining Paradise. He does not even believe in a Paradise of his own creation. By his own thought processes he condemns himself—to the deep Freudian hell of wish-fulfillment.

In that famous *Letter of the Seer* which Rimbaud wrote in his seventeenth year, a document by the way which has created more reverberations than all the writings of the masters . . . in this letter which contains the famous prescription for the poets to come, Rimbaud emphasizes that, to follow the discipline laid down, involves “ineffable torture, for which all his (the poet’s) strength is needed, all his superhuman strength.” In the pursuance of this discipline, he adds, the poet comes to stand forth “as the great in-

valid, the great criminal, the great accursed one—and the supreme savant!—for he arrives at the *unknown*!” The guarantee for this immense reward lies in the simple fact that “the poet has cultivated his soul, already richer than all others.” But what happens when the poet comes to the unknown? “He ends by losing all understanding of his visions,” says Rimbaud. (Which is what happened in his own case.) As though anticipating such a fate, he adds: “Still, he has seen them, hasn’t he? Let him burst with his palpitations—with the unheard of, nameless things he has seen. Then let other horrible workers come after him; they will begin at the horizons where he expired.”

This appeal, which had such an effect upon those to come, is noteworthy for many reasons, but chiefly because it reveals the genuine role of the poet and the true nature of tradition. Of what use the poet unless he attains to a new vision of life, unless he is willing to sacrifice his life in attesting the truth and the splendor of his vision? It is the fashion to speak of these demonic beings, these visionaries, as Romantics, to stress their subjectivity and to regard them as breaks, interruptions, stop-gaps in the great stream of tradition, as though they were madmen whirling about the pivot of self. Nothing could be more untrue. It is precisely these innovators who form the links in the great chain of creative literature. One must indeed begin at the horizons where they expire—“hold the gain,” as Rimbaud puts it—and not sit down comfortably in the ruins and piece together a puzzle of shards.

At the age of twelve it is said that Rimbaud’s piety was so exalted that he longed for martyrdom. Three years later, in *Soleil et Chair*, he exclaims: “Flesh, marble, flower, Venus, in thee I believe!” He speaks of Aphrodite throwing upon the vast universe “infinite love in an infinite smile.” And the world, he says, will answer, will vibrate “like an immense lyre in the shudder of an immense kiss.” Here we see him reverting to the paganism of innocence, to that lost golden period when his life was “a banquet at which all hearts opened, at which all wines flowed.” It is the period of self-communion, of indescribable longing for the unknown—“*l’éblouissement de l’Infini*.” In short, the period of incubation, brief but profound, like the bliss of *samadhi*.

Another three years and, only eighteen, we find him at the end of his poetic career, writing his Last Will and Testament, so to speak. The Hell he describes so vividly he has already experienced in his soul; he is now about to live it in the flesh. What heart-rending words, in the section called “Morning,” from a youth of eighteen! It is gone already, his youth, and with it all the youth of the world. His country lies prostrate and defeated; his mother wishes only to get rid of him, strange, impossible creature that he is. He has already known hunger, destitution, humiliation, rejection;

he has been in prison, has witnessed the bloody Commune, perhaps even participated in it, has experienced vice and degradation, has lost his first love, has broken with his fellow artists, has surveyed the whole field of modern art and found it empty, and is now about to consign everything to the devil, himself included. And thus, thinking of his wasted youth, as later on his death-bed he will think of his whole wasted life, he asks piteously: "Had I not *once* a youth pleasant, heroic, fabulous enough to write on leaves of gold: too much luck! Through what crime, what error, have I earned my present weakness? You who maintain that some animals sob sorrowfully, that the sick despair, that the dead have bad dreams, try to tell the story of my downfall *and my slumber*.* I myself can no more explain myself than the beggar with his continual *Pater* and *Ave Maria*. *I no longer know how to speak.*"

He has finished the story of his own private hell . . . he is about to say good-bye. It only remains to add a few parting words. Again the image of the desert occurs—one of his most persistent images. The source of his inspiration has dried up: like Lucifer, he has "used up" the light which was given him. There remains only the lure of the beyond, the call of the deep, in answer to which he finds corroboration and completion *in life* of the dread image which haunts him: the desert. He chafes at the bit. "When will we go . . . ?" he asks. "When will we go . . . to greet the birth of the new task, the new wisdom, the flight of tyrants and demons, the end of superstition; to adore—the first ones!—Christmas on Earth?" (How reminiscent, these words, of that contemporary he never knew—Nietzsche!)

What revolutionary has voiced the path of duty more clearly and poignantly? What saint has used Christmas in a more divine sense? These are the words of a rebel, yes, but not of an impious one. This is a pagan, yes, but a pagan like Virgil. This is the voice of the prophet and the task-master, of the disciple and the initiate in one. Even the priest, idolatrous, superstitious and benighted though he be, must subscribe to *this* Christmas! "Slaves, let us not curse life!" he cries. An end to weeping and wailing, to the mortification of the flesh. An end to docility and submission, to childish beliefs and childish prayers. Away with false idols and the baubles of science. Down with dictators, demagogues, and rabble-rousers. Let us not curse life, let us worship it! The whole Christian interlude has been a denial of life, a denial of God, a denial of the Spirit. Freedom has not even been dreamed of yet. Liberate the mind, the heart, the flesh! Free the soul, that it may reign securely! This is the winter of life and "I distrust winter because it is the season of comfort!" Give us Christmas on Earth . . . not Christianity. I never was a Christian, I never belonged to *your* race. Yes, my eyes are closed to *your* light. I am a beast, a nigger . . . *but I can be*

* Italics mine.

saved! You are the phony niggers, you misers, you maniacs, you fiends! I'm the real nigger and this is a nigger book. I say, let us have Christmas on Earth . . . now, *now*, do you hear? Not pie in the sky!

Thus he raves. "Thoughts out of season," indubitably.

"Ah well . . ." he seems to sigh. "Sometimes in the sky I see endless beaches covered with white and joyous nations." For a moment nothing stands between him and the certitude of dream. He sees the future as the inevitable realization of man's deepest wish. Nothing can stop it from coming, not even the phony niggers who are bugging up the world in the name of law and order. He dreams everything out to the end. All the horrible, unspeakable memories fade away. And with them all regrets. He will have his revenge yet—on the backward ones, "the friends of death." Though I go forth into the wilderness, though I make of my life a desert, though no man shall hear of me henceforth, know ye one and all that I shall be permitted to possess the truth in body and soul. You have done your utmost to disguise the truth; you have tried to destroy my soul; and in the end you will break my body on the rack . . . But I will know the truth, possess it for my own, in *this* body and with *this* soul . . .

These are the savage utterances of a seeker, a "friend of God," even though he denies the name.

* * *

"All language being idea," said Rimbaud, "the day of the universal language will come . . . This language, the *new* or *universal*, will speak from soul to soul, resuming all perfumes, sounds, colors, linking together all thought." The key to this language, it goes without saying, is the symbol, which the creator alone possesses. It is the alphabet of the soul, pristine and indestructible. By means of it the poet, who is the lord of imagination and the unacknowledged ruler of the world, communicates, holds communion, with his fellowman. It was to establish this bridge that the youthful Rimbaud gave himself up to experiment. And how he succeeded, despite the sudden and mysterious renunciation! From beyond the grave he is still communicating, more and more powerfully as the years go on. The more enigmatic he seems, the more lucid becomes his doctrine. Paradoxical? Not at all. Whatever is prophetic can be made clear only in the time and the event. In this medium one sees backward and forward with equal clarity; communication becomes the art of establishing at any moment in time a logical and harmonious rapport between the past and the future. Any and all material makes itself available, provided it be transformed into eternal currency—the language of the soul. In this realm there are no analphabets, neither are there grammarians. It is only necessary to open the heart, to throw overboard all *literary* preconceptions . . . to stand revealed, in other

words. This, of course, is tantamount to conversion. It is a radical measure, and presupposes a state of desperation. But if all other methods fail, as they inevitably do, why not this extreme measure—of conversion? It is only at the gates of hell that salvation looms. Men have failed, in every direction. Over and over they have had to retrace their steps, resume the heavy burden, begin anew the steep and difficult ascent towards the summit. Why not accept the challenge of the Spirit and yield? Why not surrender, and thus enter into a new life? The Ancient One is always waiting. Some call him the Initiator, some call him The Great Sacrifice . . .

What Rimbaud's imitators, as well as his detractors, fail to see is that he was advocating the practice of a new way of life. He was not trying to set up a new school of art, in order to divert the enfeebled spinners of words—he was pointing out the union between art and life, bridging the schism, healing the mortal wound. Divine charity, that is the key to knowledge, he says. In the very beginning of *A Season in Hell* he had written: ". . . the other day, finding myself about to croak my last, I thought of seeking again the key to the banquet of old, where I might perhaps get back my appetite. *Charity is that key.*" And then he adds: "this inspiration proves that I have been dreaming!" Dreaming in hell, of course, *in that deep slumber which is unfathomable to him*. He who had "created all festivals, all triumphs, all dramas," is obliged, during his eclipse, to bury all imagination. He who had called himself mage and angel, he who had freed himself of all ties, all claims, now finds himself brought back to earth, forced to accept, to embrace, harsh reality. *Peasant*, that is what they would make of him. Returned to the country, he is to be put out of currency . . . What lies, then, had he fed on in his swollen dreams? ("In the end I will ask to be pardoned for having fed myself on lies.") But of *whom* will he ask pardon? Not of his tormentors, certainly. Not of the age which he repudiated. Not of that old goat of a mother who would put him in harness. *Of whom*, then? Let us say it—of his peers, of those who will succeed him and carry on the good fight. He is making his apologies not to us, nor even to God, but to the men of the future, the men who will greet him with open arms when we all enter the splendid cities. These are the men "of a distant race" to whom he pays allegiance and whom he regards as his true ancestors. He is removed from them only in time, not in blood or bearing. These are the men who know how to sing under torture. They are men of spirit, and to them he is linked not by antecedents—he cannot find one in the whole history of France—but by spirit. He is born in a void and he communicates with them across the void. *We* hear only the reverberations. We marvel at the sounds of this strange tongue. We know nothing of the joy and the certitude which sustained this inhuman confabulation.

What diverse spirits he has affected, altered, enslaved! What accolades he has received, and from men as different from one another in tempera-

ment, form and substance as Valéry, Claudel, André Breton. What has he in common with them? Not even his genius, for at nineteen he ransoms his genius for mysterious ends. Every act of renunciation has but one aim: the attainment of another level. (With Rimbaud, it is a drop to another level.) Only when the singer stops singing can he live his song. And if his song is defiance? Then it is violence and catastrophe. But catastrophes, as Amiel said, bring about a violent restoration of equilibrium. And Rimbaud, born under the sign of the Balance, chooses the extremes with the passion of an equilibrist.

Always it is some invisible wand, some magic star, which beckons, and then the old wisdom, the old magic, is done for. Death and transfiguration, that is the eternal song. Some seek the death they choose, whether of form, body, wisdom or soul, directly; others approach it deviously. Some accentuate the drama by disappearing from the face of the earth, leaving no clues, no traces; others make their life an even more inspiring spectacle than the confession which is their work. Rimbaud drew his death out woefully. He spread his ruin all about him, so that none could fail to comprehend the utter futility of his flight. *Anywhere, out of the world!* That is the cry of those for whom life no longer has any meaning. Rimbaud discovered the true world as a child; he tried to proclaim it as a youth; he betrayed it as a man. Forbidden access to the world of love, all his endowments were in vain. His hell did not go deep enough, he roasted in the vestibule. It was too brief a period, this season, as we know, because the rest of his life becomes a Purgatory. Did he lack the courage to swim the deep? We do not know. We know only that he surrenders his treasure—as if *it* were the burden. But the guilt which he suffered from no man escapes, not even those who are born in the light. His failure seems stupendous, though it brought him through to victory. But it is not Rimbaud who triumphs, it is the unquenchable spirit that was in him. As Victor Hugo said: "Angel is the only word in the language that cannot be worn out."

* * *

"Creation begins with a painful separation from God and the creation of an independent will to the end that this separation may be overcome in a type of unity higher than that with which the process began." *

At the age of nineteen, in the very middle of his life, Rimbaud gave up the ghost. "His Muse died at his side, among his massacred dreams," says one biographer. Nevertheless, he was a prodigy who in three years gave the impression of exhausting whole cycles of art. "It is as if he contained whole careers within himself," said Jacques Rivière. To which Matthew Josephson adds: "Indeed literature ever since Rimbaud has been engaged in the struggle to circumvent him." Why? Because, as the latter says, "he made

* *The Mystic Will*, by H. H. Brinton.

poetry *too dangerous*." Rimbaud himself declares, in the *Season*, that he "became a fabulous opera." Opera or not, he remains fabulous—nothing less. The one side of his life is just as fabulous as the other, that is the amazing thing. Dreamer and man of action, he is both at once. It is like combining in one character Shakespeare and Bonaparte. And now listen to his own words . . . "I saw that all beings are fatally attracted to happiness: action is not life, but a way of dissipating one's strength, and enervation." And then, as if to prove it, he plunges into the maelstrom. He crosses and recrosses Europe on foot, ships in one boat after another for foreign ports, is returned ill or penniless again and again; he takes a thousand and one jobs, learns a dozen or more languages, and, in lieu of dealing in words deals in coffee, spices, ivory, skins, gold, muskets, slaves. Adventure, exploration, study; association with every type of man, race, nationality; and always work, work, work, which he loathed. But above all, *ennui*! Always bored. Incurably bored. But what activity! What a wealth of experiences! *And what emptiness!* His letters to his mother are one long plaint mingled with reproaches and recriminations, with whines, entreaties and supplications. Miserable one, accursed one! Finally he becomes "the great invalid."

What is the meaning of this flight, this endless wail, this self-inflicted torture? How true, that activity is not life! Where is life, then? And which is the true reality? Certainly it cannot be this harsh reality of toil and wandering, this sordid scrimmage for possessions?

In the *Illuminations*, written in melancholy London, he had announced: "*Je suis réellement d'outre-tombe, et pas de commissions!*" That was said as poet. Now he knows it for a fact. The musician who had found something like the key of love, as he puts it, has lost the key. He has lost the key and the instrument both. Having shut all the doors, even of friendship, having burned all his bridges behind him, he will never set foot in the dominion of love. There remain only the great solitudes in the shadow of the buried tree of Good and Evil where, in his *Matinée d'ivresse*, occurs that nostalgic phrase—"afinque nous ramenions notre très pur amour." He wanted salvation in the form of liberty, never realizing that it comes only through surrender, through acceptance. "*Tout homme*," said his master Baudelaire, "*qui n'accepte pas les conditions de sa vie vend son âme*." With Rimbaud, creation and experience were virtually simultaneous; he required only a minimum of experience to make music. As the youthful prodigy he is closer to the musician or the mathematician than the man of letters. He is born with a supersensible memory. He does not earn his creation by the sweat of his brow—it is there, on tap, waiting to be roused by the first contact with harsh reality. It is sorrow which he must cultivate, not the virtuosity of the maestro. He does not have long to wait, as we know.

He was born a seed and he remains a seed. That is the meaning of the night which surrounds him. In him there was light, a wondrous light, but it was not to shed its rays until he had perished. He came from beyond the grave, of a distant race, bringing a new spirit and a new consciousness. Does he not say—"it is wrong to say *je pense*; one should say *on me pense*."? And is it not he who says—"genius is love and the future"? Everything he says in connection with the I of the genius is illuminating and revelatory. This one I find most significant . . . "His body is the release of which we have dreamed; the shattering of a grace thwarted by a new violence."

Let me not be accused of reading too deeply. Rimbaud meant everything he wrote "literally and in all senses," as he once explained to his mother or sister. True, he was referring then to *A Season in Hell*. Nevertheless . . . It was with him as it was with Blake and Jacob Boehme: everything they uttered was true, literal, and inspired. They dwelt in the Imagination; their dreams were realities, realities which *we* have yet to experience. "If I read myself," says Boehme, "I read God's book, and you my brothers are the alphabet which I read in myself, for my mind and will find you within me. I wish from my heart you would also find me." That last utterance voices the silent prayer which Rimbaud is constantly sending forth from the wilderness which he created for himself. The "benevolent" pride of the genius lies in his will which must be broken. The secret of deliverance lies in the practice of charity. Charity *is* the key, and Rimbaud *was* dreaming when he realized it, but the dream was reality and this reality only makes itself felt again when he is on his death-bed, when charity becomes the sweet sister which escorts him to the beyond, broken but redeemed.

During the "Night in Hell," when he realizes that he is the slave of his baptism, he cries: "O Parents, you contrived my misfortune, and your own." In the dark night of the soul, during which he proclaims himself a master in phantasmagoria and boasts that he is going to unveil every mystery, he renounces everything which would link him with the age or the land he was born in. "I am ready for perfection," he states. And he was, in a sense. He had prepared his own initiation, survived the terrible ordeal, and then relapsed into the night in which he was born. He had perceived that there was a step beyond art, he had put his foot over the threshold, and then in terror or in fear of madness he had retreated. His preparations for a new life were either insufficient or of the wrong order. Most commentators think the latter, though both are possibly true. So much emphasis has been laid upon that phrase—"long, immense, logical derangement of all the senses." So much has been said about his early debauches, about his "Bohemian" life. One forgets how utterly normal that was for a precocious youth bursting with ideas who has run away from an intolerable home atmosphere in the provinces. Rare creature that

he was, he would have been abnormal had he not succumbed to the potent appeals of a city like Paris. If he was excessive in his indulgence it is only to say that the vaccination took with a vengeance. It was not such a long time he spent either in Paris or in London. Not enough to ruin a healthy lad of peasant stock. For one who was in revolt against everything it was in fact a salutary experience. The road to heaven leads through hell, does it not? To earn salvation one has to become inoculated with sin. One has to savor them all, the capital as well as the trivial sins. One has to earn death with all one's appetites, refuse no poison, reject no experience however degrading or sordid. One has to come to the end of one's forces, learn that one *is* a slave—in whatever realm—in order to desire emancipation. The perverse, negative will fostered by one's parents has to be made submissive before it can become positive and integrated with the heart and mind. The Father (in all his guises) has to be dethroned so that the Son may reign. The Father is Saturnian in every phase of his being. He is the stern task-master, the dead letter of the Law, the *Verboten* sign. One kicks the traces over, goes berserk, filled with a false power and a foolish pride. And then one breaks, and the I that is not the I surrenders. *But Rimbaud did not break.* He does not dethrone the Father, he identifies himself with him. He does it as much through his god-like assumption of authority as through his excesses, his ramblings, his irresponsibility. He goes over into the opposite, becomes the very enemy whom he hated. In short, he abdicates, becomes a vagabond god in search of his true kingdom. "To emasculate oneself, is not that a sure way of damning yourself?" (This is one of the many questions he poses during his agony.) And that is precisely what he does. He emasculates himself by abdicating the role for which he was chosen . . . Is it possible that in Rimbaud the sense of guilt was atrophied?

What a struggle for power, possessions, security he wages during the "active" period of his life! Did he not realize what a treasure he possessed, what power he wielded, what unimpeachable security he knew when he was simply the poet? (I wish I could say that he also revealed himself to be the poet of action, but the accidents which stud the latter half of his life never develop into those incidents which profit the man of action.) No, there is a blindness which it is impossible to fathom, and Rimbaud's is that sort. A curse has been laid on him. He not only loses his sense of direction, but he loses his touch. Everything goes wrong. He changes identity so thoroughly that if he were to pass himself on the road he would not recognize himself. This is perhaps the last desperate way of tricking madness—to become so utterly sane that one does not know one is insane. Rimbaud never lost contact with reality; on the contrary, he embraced it like a fiend. What he did was to forsake the true reality of his being. No wonder that he was bored to death. He could not possibly live with himself, since

that self was in forfeit. In this respect one is reminded of Lautréamont's words: "I go on existing, like basalt! In the middle, as in the beginning of life, angels resemble themselves: how long it has been since I ceased to resemble myself!"

One has the feeling that in Abyssinia he even tried to amputate the organ of memory. But towards the end, when he has become "the great invalid," when to the accompaniment of a hand organ he takes up the thread of his stifled dreams, the memories of the past well up. What a pity we have no record of the strange language he indulged in on the hospital bed, his leg gone, a huge tumor blossoming on his thigh, the insidious cancer germs roving through his body like plundering marauders. Dreams and hallucinations vie with one another in an endless fugue—and no audience but the devout sister who is praying for his soul. Now the dreams he dreamed and the dreams he lived interfuse; the spirit, at last freed of its fetters, makes music again.

His sister has attempted to give us an inkling of these unrecorded melodies. She remarks, if I remember rightly, upon their supernal quality. They were not, we are led to believe, like either the poems or the illuminations. They were all that plus something else, plus that something, perhaps, which Beethoven gave us in the last quartets. He had not lost the master's touch; with the approach of death he was even more the genius than he was in his youth. They are fugues now not of clashing, discordant phrases however illuminated, but of essences and quintessences garnered through the struggle with the sternest demon of all, Life. Experience and imagination now blend to form a chant which is a gift and not a curse or a malediction. It is no longer *his* music, *his* magistracy. The ego has been routed, the song and the instrument become one. It is his oblation on the altar of dethroned pride. It is the Apocatastasis. Creation is no longer arrogance, defiance, or vanity but play. He can play now on his death-bed as he can pray, for his work as a sufferer is ended. The keel of his ship has at last burst asunder, he is going to the sea. Perhaps in these last hours he understands the true purpose of human toil, that it is slavery when linked to blind or selfish ends and joy when it is performed in the service of mankind.

There is no joy like the joy of the creator, for creation has no other end than creation. "Let us refine our fingers, that is, *all* our points of contact with the external world," he once urged. In the same sense God refines His fingers—when he elevates man to the level of creation. The thrill of creation is felt throughout all creation. All forms, all orders of being from the angels to the worms, are struggling to communicate with those above and below. No efforts are lost, no music goes unheard. But in every mis-use of power not only is God wounded but Creation itself is halted and Christmas on Earth postponed that much longer.

"Ahl je n'aurai plus d'envie:
Il s'est chargé de ma vie.

Salut à lui chaque fois
Que chante le coq gaulois."

I transpose these couplets deliberately in the same spirit that I once mistakenly translated "*il*" as *Dieu*. I cannot help but believe that the fatal attraction to *le bonheur* which Rimbaud spoke of means the joy of finding God. *Alors—"Salut à Lui chaque fois que . . ."*

* * *

Why is it, I ask myself, that I adore Rimbaud above all other writers? I am no worshipper of adolescence, neither do I pretend to myself that he is as great as other writers I might mention. But there is something in him that touches me as the work of no other man does. And I come to him through the fogs of a language I have never mastered! Indeed, it was not until I foolishly tried to translate him that I began to properly estimate the strength and the beauty of his utterances. In Rimbaud I see myself as in a mirror. Nothing he says is alien to me, however wild, absurd or difficult to understand. To understand one has to surrender, and I remember distinctly making that surrender the first day I glanced at his work. I read only a few lines that day, a little over ten years ago, and trembling like a leaf I put the book away. I had the feeling then, and I have it still, that he had said *all* for our time. It was as though he had put a tent over the void. He is the only writer whom I have read and re-read with undiminished joy and excitement, always discovering something new in him, always profoundly touched by his purity. Whatever I say of him will always be tentative, nothing more than an approach—at best an *aperçu*. He is the one writer whose genius I envy; all the others, no matter how great, never arouse my jealousy. And he was finished at nineteen! Had I read Rimbaud in my youth I doubt that I would ever have written a line. How fortunate sometimes is our ignorance!

Until I ran across Rimbaud it was Dostoievski who reigned supreme. In one sense he always will, just as Buddha will always be dearer to me than Christ. Dostoievski went to the very bottom, remained there an immeasurable time, and emerged a whole man. I prefer the whole man. And if I must live only once on this earth, then I prefer to know it as Hell, Purgatory and Paradise all in one. Rimbaud experienced a Paradise, but it was premature. Still, because of that experience, he was able to give us a more vivid picture of Hell. His life as a man, though he was never a mature man, was a Purgatory. But that is the lot of most artists. What

interests me extremely in Rimbaud is his vision of Paradise regained, Paradise *earned*. This, of course, is something apart from the splendor and the magic of his words, which I consider incomparable. What defeats me is his life, which is at such utter variance with his vision. Whenever I read his life I feel that I too have failed, that all of us fail. And then I go back to his words—and they never fail.

Why is it then that I now adore him above all other writers? Is it because his failure is so instructive? Is it because he resisted until the very last? I admit it, I love all those men who are called rebels and failures. I love them because they are so human, so human—all-too-human. We know that God too loves them above all others. Why? Is it because they are the proving ground of the spirit? Is it because they are the sacrificed ones? How Heaven rejoices when the prodigal son returns! Is this an invention of man's or of God's? I believe that here man and God see eye to eye. Man reaches upward, God reaches downward; sometimes their fingers touch.

When I am in doubt as to whom I love more, those who resist or those who surrender, I know that they are one and the same. One thing is certain, God does not want us to come to Him in innocence. We are to know sin and evil, we are to stray from the path, to get lost, to become defiant and desperate: we are to resist as long as we have the strength to resist, in order that the surrender be complete and abject. It is our privilege as free spirits to elect for God with eyes wide open, with hearts brimming over, with a desire that outweighs all desires. The innocent one! God has no use for him. He is the one who "plays at Paradise for eternity." To become ever more conscious, ever more gravid with knowledge, to become more and more burdened with guilt—that is man's privilege. No man is free of guilt; to whatever level one attains one is beset with new responsibilities, new sins. In destroying man's innocence God converted man into a potential ally. Through reason and will He gave him the power of choice. And man in his wisdom always chooses God.

I spoke a while back of Rimbaud's preparations for a new life, meaning of course the life of the spirit. I would like to say a little more about this, to add that not only were these preparations insufficient and of the wrong sort but that he was the victim of a grave misunderstanding as to the nature of his role. Had he known a different spiritual climate his life might well have taken a different course. Had he ever encountered a Master he would never have made a martyr of himself. He was ready for quite a different sort of adventure than the one he experienced. And in another sense he was not ready, because, as the saying goes, when the pupil is ready the Master is always there. The trouble was that he would acknowledge "*ni Maître, ni Dieu*." He was in dire need of help, but his pride was in-

ordinate. Rather than humble himself, rather than bend, he flings himself to the dogs. That he could only remain intact by renouncing his calling is a tribute to his purity but also a condemnation of the age. I think of Boehme, who was a cobbler, who did not have a language, we might say, but who forged one for himself and with it, baffling as it may be to the uninitiated, communicated his message to the world. It may be said of course that by abruptly silencing his voice Rimbaud also succeeded in communicating, but such was not his intention. He despised the world which wanted to acclaim him, he denied that his work had any value. But this has only one meaning—that he wanted to be taken at face value! If one wishes to read deeper into this act of renunciation, then one can compare it with Christ's and say that he chose his martyrdom in order to give it everlasting significance. But Rimbaud chose unconsciously. It was those who had need of him, those whom he despised, who gave his work *and* his life meaning. Rimbaud simply threw up his hands. He was not prepared to accept responsibility for his utterances knowing that he could not be accepted at face value.

It is not strange that the Nineteenth Century is constellated with demonic figures. One has only to think of Blake, de Nerval, Kierkegaard, Lautréamont, Strindberg, Nietzsche, Dostoevski—all tragic figures, and tragic in a new sense. All of them are concerned with the problem of the soul, with the expansion of consciousness and the creation of new moral values. At the hub of this wheel which sheds light on the void, Blake and Nietzsche reign like dazzling twin stars; their message is still so new that we think of them in terms of insanity.* Nietzsche rearranges all existent values; Blake fashions a new cosmogony. Rimbaud is close to both in many ways. He is like a nova which appears suddenly, grows to terrifying brilliance, then plunges to earth. ("Et je vécus, étincelle d'or de la lumière *nature*.") In the darkness of the womb, which he sought with the same ferocity as he did the light of heaven, he transforms into radium. His is a substance which it is dangerous to handle; his is a light which annihilates when it does not exalt or illumine. As a star he hovered too close to the earth's orbit. Not content to shed his brilliance *over* the earth, he was fatally attracted by the reflection of his own image in the dead mirror of life. He wanted to transform his light into radiant power; this could only be accomplished by a fall. This delusion, which Orientals call ignorance rather than sin, emphasizes the confusion between the domains of art and of life which gripped the men of the Nineteenth Century. All the great spirits of the modern age have struggled to demagnetize themselves, as it were. All were annihilated by Jovian bolts. They were like inventors who, having discov-

* "Let us be happy! I am God, and I have made this caricature." (Nietzsche from the asylum.)

ered electricity, knew nothing about insulation. They were attuned to a new power which was breaking through, but their experiments led to disaster.

All these men, and Rimbaud was one of them, were inventors, law-givers, warriors, prophets. They *happened* to be poets. The superabundance of their talents, coupled with the fact that the age was not ripe for their coming, combined to create an ambiance of defeat and frustration. In a profound sense they were usurpers, and the fate meted out to them reminds us of the suffering of the protagonists in the ancient Greek dramas. They were pursued and laid low by the Furies which, in modern parlance, are the insanities. Such is the price man pays when he attempts to elevate the magical level of his gods, when he attempts to live in accordance with the new code before the new gods are securely entrenched. These gods, of course, are always the projection of man's exalted inner powers. They represent the magical element in creation; they blind and intoxicate because they rend the darkness from which they spring. Baudelaire expressed it out of the depths of his own bitter experience when he said: "*En effet il est défendu à l'homme, sous peine de déchéance et de mort intellectuelle, de déranger les conditions primordiales de son existence et de rompre l'équilibre de ses facultés avec les milieux où elles sont destinées à se mouvoir, de déranger son destin pour y substituer une fatalité d'un genre nouveau . . .*"

In brief, the dreamer should be content to dream, confident that "imagination makes substance." This is the poet's function, the highest because it brings him to the unknown—to the limits of creation. The masters are beyond the spell of creation; they function in the pure white light of being. They are done with becoming; they have incorporated themselves in the heart of creation, fully realized as men and luminous with the glow of the divine essence. They have transfigured themselves to the point where they have only to radiate their divinity.

The elect, being adepts, are at home anywhere. They know the meaning of hell but they do not localize it, not even as earthly existence. They are devachanees; they enjoy the intervals between one state of existence and another. But the free spirits, who are the tormented ones—born out of time and out of rhythm—can only interpret their intermediary states as hell itself. Rimbaud was such a one. The excruciating boredom from which he suffered was the reflection of the vacuum in which he existed—whether he created it or not is immaterial. One thing seems clear, in this connection: he could put his powers to no use. This is a partial truth, to be sure, but it is this aspect of truth which the man of culture is concerned with. It is the truth of history, so to speak. And history tends more and more to be identified as man's fate.

Now and then, from the deep, hidden river of life, great spirits in human form are thrown up; like semaphores in the night they warn of danger

ahead. But their appeal is in vain to those "abandoned but still burning locomotives" (the false spirits of the age) "who hold to the rails for a time." The culture of these souls, said Rimbaud, whose image I use, *began with accidents*. It is this atmosphere of accident and catastrophe which permeates the historical level of interpretation. The demonic figures, possessed because they are imbued with a passion beyond them, are the sentinels who appear from nowhere in the darkest hours of night. Theirs is the voice which goes unheeded.

The bogs of Western culture which await the derailed *trains de luxe* in which our pompous spirits sit blithely bombinating their stale aphorisms Rimbaud described vividly. "I see that my discomforts come from my failure to understand soon enough that we are of the Western World. The marshes of the West!" Then quickly he adds: "*Non que je croie la lumière altérée, la forme extenuée, le mouvement égaré . . .*" (He is not the dupe of history, one observes.) In the next breath, as if he knew his fate from eternity, he is saying: "*L'esprit est autorité, il veut que je sois en Occident.*"

Now and then, during his sojourn in the lower depths, he remarks, quite as though he were stirring in his sleep—"C'est la vie encore!" Yes, life it is, no mistake about it. Only it is the other side of that double-faced coin. And he who, however mockingly he phrases it, is nevertheless in possession of the truth, must put up with it, must see it through. There will be no other life for him . . . he chose it from beyond the grave. All the elements of his character were laid down at birth; they will lend to his destiny the unique character of his agony. He will suffer not only because his parents willed it, not only because the age demanded that he suffer, he will suffer because of the whole evolution through which the spirit of man has gone. He will suffer precisely because it is the spirit of man which is in travail. He will suffer as only the seed suffers when it falls upon barren ground.

In the light of these reflections, why should the second half of his life appear more mysterious and enigmatic than the first? Is a man's destiny not determined by his character? We become what we are, else all is the play of hazard. The fortuitous *rencontres*, the strange accidents of fortune, make sublime sense. A man is always consistent with himself, even when at some unforeseen moment in an otherwise commendable life he suddenly commits a horrible crime. It is so often, is it not, the man of exemplary character who commits the nauseating crime.

Rimbaud repeatedly calls attention to his bad traits. He underscores them, in fact. When I spoke earlier of the latter half of his life being a Calvary, I meant it in the sense that he gave his impulses free rein. He is crucified not because of his exceptional qualities, for they would have borne him through any ordeal, but because he surrenders to his instincts. For Rimbaud this surrender spells abdication: the ungovernable steeds take

over the reins. What work it is now to find the right track! Endless work. Sometimes it would seem that he is not so much a *different* man as a man at loose ends. The poet will still manifest himself, if only in the bizarre pattern of his erratic tracks. Look at the places he allows himself to be dragged to! He is in and out of almost every European port, headed now this way, now that—Cyprus, Norway, Egypt, Java, Arabia, Abyssinia. Think of his pursuits, his studies, his speculations! All marked "exotic." His exploits are as daring and uncharted as his poetic flights. His life is never prosaic, however dull or painful it may appear to him . . . He was in the midst of life, thinks the clerk in his office. Yes, many a solid citizen, to say nothing of the poets, would give an arm or a leg could they but imitate Rimbaud's adventurous life. The pathologist may call it "ambulatory paranoia," but to the stay-at-home it seems like bliss. To the Frenchman cultivating his garden it must, of course, have seemed like sheer dementia. It must have been terrifying, this *tour du monde* on an empty stomach. It must have seemed even more crazy, more terrifying, when they learned that he was getting dysentery from constantly carrying in his belt 40,000 francs in gold. Whatever he did was bizarre, fantastic, *inouï*. His itinerary is one uninterrupted phantasmagoria. Yes, there are the passionate and imaginative elements in it which we admire in his writing, no question about that. But there is also a coldness about his acts, just as there was in his behavior as a poet. Even in his poetry there is this cold fire, this light without warmth. This is an element which his mother donated and which she aggravates by her attitude towards him. To her he is always unpredictable, the dismal sport of a loveless marriage. No matter how he struggles to remove himself from the parental orbit, she is there like a lodestone pulling him back. He can free himself from the claims of the literary world but never from the mother. She is the black star which attracts him fatally. Why did he not forget about her utterly, as he did all the others? Evidently she is the link with the past which he cannot relinquish. She becomes, in fact, *the past*. His father had the wanderlust too, it seems, and finally, just after Rimbaud was born, he wandered away forever. But the son, no matter how far he wanders, cannot make this break; he takes the father's place, and like the father whom he identifies himself with, he continues to add to his mother's misery. And so he wanders. He wanders and wanders until he reaches the land of the shepherds "where the zebus dream, buried in grass up to the dew-laps." There he too dreams, I am certain, but whether they are glorious or bitter dreams we do not know. He no longer puts them down; he gives us only the marginal notes—instructions, requests, demands, complaints. Had he ~~reached~~ the point where it was no longer necessary to record his dreams? Was action the substitute? These questions will be asked eternally. One thing alone is evident—he knew no joy. He

was still possessed, still driven. He does not abandon the creator's task in order to bask in the light. He is all energy, but it is not the energy of a being "whose center is at rest." *

Wherein lies the enigma, then? Not in his outward behavior, certainly, for even as a freak he is consistent with himself. Even when he dreams of one day having a son, a son who might become an engineer (sic), we can follow him. To be sure, the idea is a bit *bouleversante*, but we can swallow it. Has he not prepared us to expect *anything* of him? Is he not human too? Has he not a right to play with notions of marriage, fatherhood and such like? The poet who can go elephant hunting, who can write home for a "Theoretical and Practical Manual of Exploration," who can dream of submitting a paper on the Gallas to the Geographical Society, what is so startling if he also craves a white wife and a child after his own heart? People wonder that he treated his Abyssinian mistress so decently. And why not, pray? Is it so strange that he should be civil, polite, even considerate . . . that he should now and then do a little good, as he puts it? Let us remember Shylock's speech!

No, what is difficult to swallow, what sticks like a lump in the throat, is his renunciation of art. This is where Monsieur Tout-le-monde comes in. This is his *crime*, as we like to say. All his faults, his vices, his excesses we can pardon—but not this. This is the unforgivable affront, *n'est-ce pas?* How we betray ourselves here! We would all like to run out sometimes, wouldn't we? We are fed up, sick of the whole works, but we stick. We stick because we lack the courage, the imagination to follow suit. We don't stick it out of a sense of solidarity. Ah no! Solidarity is a myth—in this age, at least. Solidarity is for slaves who wait until the world becomes one huge wolf pack . . . then they will pounce all at once, all together, and rip and rend like envious beasts. Rimbaud was a lone wolf. He did not, however, slink out by the back door with his tail between his legs. No, nothing of the sort. He thumbed his nose at Parnassus—and at the judges, priests, school-masters, critics, slave-drivers, money-bags and mountebanks who make up our distinguished cultural society. (Don't flatter yourself that his age was any worse than ours! Don't think for a moment that these misers, maniacs and hyenas, these phony ones on every level, are now extinct! This is *your* problem as well as his!) No, as I say, he wasn't worried about not being accepted . . . he despised the petty satisfactions which most of us crave. He saw that it was all a stinking mess, that being another historical cipher would get him nowhere. He wanted to live, he wanted more room, more freedom: he wanted to express himself, no matter how. And so he said, "*Fuck you, Jack! Fuck you one and all!*" Whereupon

* "The difficulty now is to get rid of me," said Nietzsche from the asylum—signed "The Crucified One."

he opened his fly and pissed on the works—and from a considerable height, as Céline once put it. And that, dear slaves of life, is really unpardonable, is it not? *That is the crime*, isn't it? Very well, let us pronounce the verdict. "Rimbaud, you have been judged guilty. You will have your head neatly cut off in a public place in the name of the discontented artists of the civilized world." At this moment, when I think of the glee with which the mob always rushes to the guillotine, especially when there is a "choice" victim, I recall the words of "The Stranger" in Albert Camus' novel—and I know what it is to be an alien soul. The *procureur* has just put to the audience attending the trial of this "monster" the rhetorical question: "*A-t-il seulement exprimé des regrets? Jamais, messieurs. Pas une seule fois au cours de l'instruction cet homme n'a paru ému de son abominable forfait.*" (This is always the real crime, notice . . . never the crime itself.) And so, at this point, the victim continues his interior monologue. . . . "*A ce moment, il s'est tourné vers moi et m'a désigné du doigt en continuant à m'accabler sans qu'en réalité je comprenne bien pourquoi. Sans doute je ne pouvais pas m'empêcher de reconnaître qu'il avait raison. Je ne regrettais pas beaucoup mon acte. Mais tant d'acharnement m'étonnait. J'aurais voulu essayer de lui expliquer cordialement, presque avec affection, que je ne n'avais jamais pu regretter vraiment quelque chose. J'étais toujours pris par ce qui allait arriver, par aujourd'hui ou par demain. Mais naturellement, dans l'état où l'on m'avait mis, je ne pouvais parler à personne sur ce ton. Je n'avais pas le droit de me montrer affectueux, d'avoir de la bonne volonté. Et j'ai essayé d'écouter encore parce que le procureur s'est mis à parler de mon âme.*"

* * *

In the section of *Clowns and Angels* called "The Poet's Creation," Wallace Fowlie puts his finger on that superlative aspect of Rimbaud's being which sets him apart, which marks, in my opinion, the heroism of the poet. "The genius," he writes, "is both the master of silence and its slave. The poet exists not only in the words to which he signs his name, but he is also in the whiteness which remains on the page. His honesty is his intactness, and Rimbaud gloriously lived intact."

It is curious to note how Rimbaud himself employs this word "intact." "*Les criminels dégoutent comme des chatrés; moi, je suis intact, et ça m'est égal.*" He sees the master and the slave, the judge and the criminal, the rebel and the conformer held by the same yoke: this is their Hell, to be yoked to one another under the delusion that they differ one from the other. The poet is in the same predicament, he implies. He too is bound; his spirit is not free, his imagination cannot soar unfettered. Rimbaud therefore refuses to revolt, he renounces. Though he had not intended it,

it was the surest way to make his influence felt. By maintaining a resolute silence he makes his presence felt. This comes close to resembling the technique of the sage.* It is more effective than cannonades. Instead of becoming another voice, the poet thus becomes *the* voice—the voice of the silence.

While you are in the world and part of it, say your say, then shut your trap forever more! But don't capitulate, don't bend! The penalty? Ejection. Self-ejection, since one has already rejected the world. Is it such a terrible fate? Only if one aspires to the light of fame. There must be those, too, who reign in silence and in darkness. The world is composed of dualities, in the spiritual as well as the physical realm. Evil has just as great a place as good, darkness as light. Shadow and substance always. To the man of God it is the twilight world which is uninhabitable, for this is the realm of confusion. It was in this zone that Nietzsche situated the fallen gods. In this realm neither God nor Satan is recognizable. This is the valley of death which the spirit traverses, the dark interval during which man loses his relation with the cosmos. It is also "the time of the Assassins." Men no longer vibrate with exaltation; they writhe and squirm with envy and hate. Having no armature they know nothing of altitude; acknowledging no tension, they merely react. The medieval man recognized the Prince of Darkness and paid just homage to the powers of evil, as is evident from the testimony of stone and script. But the man of the Middle Ages also recognized and acknowledged God. His life therefore was keen and rich, it sounded the full gamut. By contrast, the life of the modern man is pale and empty. The terrors he knows exceed any known to the men of previous ages, for he lives in the world of the unreal, surrounded by phantoms. He has not even the possibilities of joy or deliverance which were open to the slaves of the ancient world. He has become the victim of his own inner emptiness; his torments are the torments of sterility. Amiel, who knew the age so well and who was also a "victim" of it, has given us an account of "the sterility of genius." This is one of the most alarming phrases that man can utter. It means the end is in sight . . .

Speaking of the end, I cannot help recalling Amiel's words when referring to the repugnance which Taine's style aroused in him. "It excites no feeling whatever; it is simply a means of information. I imagine this kind of thing will be the literature of the future—a literature *à l'américaine*, as different as possible from Greek art, giving us algebra instead of life, the formula instead of the image, the exhalations of the crucible instead of the divine madness of Apollo. Cold vision will replace the joys of thought, and we shall see the death of poetry, flayed and dissected by science."

In the case of a suicide we do not concern ourselves with whether he

*Did not Lao-tse attempt the same thing?

died a quick or a lingering death, whether his agony was great or little. It is the *act* which has importance for us, for suddenly we are made to realize that to be and not to be are acts—not intransitive verbs!—which make existence and death synonymous. The act of the suicide always has a detonating effect; it shocks us for a moment into awareness. It makes us realize that *we* are blind and dead. How typical of our sick-ridden world that the law should view such attempts with hypocritical severity! We don't want to be reminded of what we have left undone; we cower at the thought that from beyond the grave the finger of the escaped one will be forever pointed at us.

Rimbaud was a *living* suicide. All the more unbearable for us! In decency he might have ended it at nineteen, but no, he dragged it out, he made us witness, through the folly of a wasted life, the living death which we are all inflicting upon ourselves. He caricatured his own grandeur, so that we might revile our puny efforts the more. He toiled like a nigger, so that we might revel in the life of slavery which we have adopted. All the qualities which he displayed in the eighteen year struggle with life were qualities which make, as we say to-day, "for success." That he should have made of success such a bitter failure was his triumph. It required diabolical courage (even if it was unwitting) to make that proof demonstrable. When we pity the suicide we pity ourselves, really, for lacking the courage to follow his example. We cannot abide too many defections from the ranks—we would be demoralized. What we want are victims of life to keep us company in our misery. We know each other so well, too well; we disgust one another. But we continue to observe the conventional politeness of worms. We try to do it even when we are exterminating one another. . . . Familiar words, these, are they not? They will be repeated to us by Lawrence, by Céline, by Malaquais—and by others. And those who use these words will be reviled as renegades, as escapists, as rats who desert the sinking ship. (As if the rats did not show supreme intelligence!) But the ship *is* sinking, there are no two ways about that. Lawrence tells about it in his war letters, and again in writing of *Moby Dick* . . . *On va où l'on pèse*, declares St. Exupéry in the exalted pages of his *Pilote de Guerre*.

We're on the way, no doubt about that. But where is the Ark which will carry us through the Flood? And of what materials will it be made? As for the chosen ones, they will unquestionably have to be made of different fibre than the men who made *this* world. We are coming to the end, and it is a catastrophic end which we face. Warnings communicated by word have long ceased to move us. Acts are demanded, suicidal acts perhaps, but acts fraught with meaning.

Rimbaud's gesture of renunciation was such an act. It leavened literature. Will it leaven life? I doubt it. I doubt if anything will stem the tide which

threatens to engulf us. But there is one thing his coming did achieve—it transformed those of us who are still sentient, still alive to the future, into “arrows of longing for the other shore.”

* * *

The important thing about death, for man, is that he is able to distinguish it from dissolution. Man dies *for* something, if he dies at all. The order and harmony which sprang from primordial chaos, as the myths tell us, infuse our lives with a purpose which is beyond us, a purpose to which we sacrifice ourselves when we achieve awareness. This sacrifice is made on the altar of creation. What we create with hand and tongue is nothing; it is what we create with our lives that counts. It is only when we make ourselves a part of creation that we begin to live.

It is not death which challenges us at every step but life. We have honored the death-eaters *ad nauseam*, but what of those who accept the challenge of life? In what way do we honor these? From Lucifer to Anti-Christ there runs a flame of passion which man will always honor as long as he is mere man; it is against this passion, which is the flame of life, that we must oppose the serene acceptance of the enlightened ones. One must pass through the flame in order to know death and embrace it. The strength of the rebel, who is the Evil One, lies in his inflexibility, but true strength lies in submission which permits one to dedicate his life, through devotion, to something beyond himself. The strength of the one leads to isolation, which is castration, while the strength of the other leads to unification, which is lasting fertility.

But passion always has its *raison d'être*, and the passion of the creator, which makes his life on earth a Calvary, has its higher octave in the passion of a Christ who incarnates all human suffering. The poet's passion is the result of his vision, of his ability to see life in its essence and its wholeness. Once this vision is shattered or deranged, passion dribbles away. In the realm of art we are definitely approaching the end of passion. Though we still turn out productive giants, their works lie like fallen tomb-stones amidst the still intact, still upright splendors of ancient times. Despite all its powers, society can not sustain the artist if it is impervious to the *vision* of the artist. For a long time now our society has been thoroughly uninterested in the message of the artist. The voice which goes unheeded eventually becomes silent. For the anarchy of society the artist answers with anaudia. Rimbaud was the first to make the gesture. His example has cast a spell on us. Let us not look for his disciples among the literary figures of our time, let us seek them rather in the obscure, eclipsed ones, among the young who are forced to stifle their genius. Let us look first of all to our own country, America, where the toll is heaviest. In this new form of protest we assist

at the destruction of the egg. This is the surest way to undermine the tottering edifice of a rotten society. Its effects are more swift and lasting than the havoc wrought by Super-fortresses. If the poet is to have no place, no share, in the birth of a new order then he will blast it at the very core. This threat is not imaginary, it is actual. It is the prelude to a dance of death more terrible far than that of the Middle Ages.

The only creative spirits in modern times were the demonic beings; in them was focussed the passion which is dribbling away. They had rediscovered the source of life, that banquet of old at which Rimbaud sought to restore his appetite, but their means of communication were cut off. *Men no longer communicate*, that is the tragedy of modern times. Society has long since ceased to be a community; it has broken up into aggregations of helpless atoms. That which alone can unite it—the presence and worship of God—is missing.

When, in his extreme youth, Rimbaud chalked up on the doors of the churches "*Death to God!*" he proved himself to be closer to God than the powers who rule the Church. His arrogance and defiance were never directed against the poor, the unfortunate, the truly devout; he was fighting the usurpers and pretenders, fighting all that was false, vain, hypocritical and life-destroying. He wanted the earth to re-become the Paradise which it was, which it still is beneath the veil of illusion and delusion. He was utterly uninterested in a ghostly Paradise situated in a mythical beyond. Here and now, in the flesh, as members of one great community fired with life—that was how he envisaged Christmas on Earth.

"*On meurt pour cela dont on peut vivre.*" These are not his words, but the meaning is his. Death lies in separation, in living apart. It does not mean simply to cease being. A life which has no significance here below will have none in the hereafter. Rimbaud, I believe, understood this clearly. He gave up the struggle on one level to resume it on another. His renunciation was in this sense an affirmation. He realized that only in silence and darkness could the ingredients of art be restored. He followed the laws of his being to the end, shattering all forms, his own included. At the very beginning of his career he understood what others only understand at the end, if at all, that the sacred word no longer has validity. He realized that the poison of culture had transformed beauty and truth into artifice and deception. He takes Beauty on his knee and he finds her bitter. He abandons her. It is the only way he can still honor her. What is it again that he says in the depths of hell? "*Des erreurs qu'on me souffle: magies, faux parfums, musique puérile.*" (For me this is the most haunting, baffling line in the *Season*.) When he boasted that he possessed all talents, he meant—on this phony level! Or—with this "lying cultural mask." In this realm he was, of course, a master. But this is the realm of confusion, the *Mamser*

world. Here everything is of equal value and therefore of no value. Do you want me to whistle? Do you want a *danse de ventre*? Okay! Anything you wish. Just name it!

Everything that Rimbaud voiced in his writings proclaimed this truth, that "we live not in the midst of facts, but of profundities and symbols." The mystery which inheres in his writing permeates his life. We cannot *explain* his actions, we can only permit them to reveal what we long to know. He was as much a mystery to himself as to others, as much mystified by his own utterances as by his subsequent life in the world. He sought the outside world as a refuge. A refuge from what? Perhaps from the terrors of lucidity. He is like a saint in reverse. With him the light comes first, then the knowledge and experience of sin. Sin is a mystery to him; he has to put it on, as the penitents of old adopted the hair shirt.

He ran away, we say. But perhaps he ran *towards* something. It is obvious that he avoided one kind of madness only to become the victim of another. He squeezes out of exits like a man struggling with a strait-jacket. No sooner has one tragedy been averted than another besets him. He is a marked man. "They" are after him. His poetic flights, which are like progressive stages in an interrupted trance, had their parallel in the senseless flights which rushed him headlong from one corner of the world to another. How often he is brought back crushed and defeated! He rests just long enough to be repaired—like a cruiser or a long range bomber. Ready for action again. Zoom! He is off, flying towards the sun. It is light he seeks—and human warmth. His illuminations seem to have drained him of all natural warmth; in his blood is a glacial thaw. But the farther he flies the darker it gets. The earth is enveloped in blood and darkness. The ice caps move in towards the center.

It was his destiny, it seems, to have wings and to be chained to the earth. He strains as if to make the outermost stars, only to find himself wallowing in the mud. Indeed, the more he flaps his wings, the deeper he finds himself imprisoned in the earth. In him fire and air war with water and earth. He is an eagle chained to a rock. The little birds are the ones which eat his heart out.

His time was not yet. Too soon, this vision of Christmas on Earth! Too early, the hope of abolishing false gods, crude superstitions, cheap panaceas. The race of this earth has a long period of travail ahead before emerging into the white light of dawn. *Dawn* is a pregnant word with him . . . In his heart Rimbaud seems to have understood. We should never interpret his tremendous desire for liberty—it is the desire of a doomed man!—as a wish for his own personal salvation.* He speaks for the race of Adam which knew eternal life but exchanged it for the knowledge which is death.

* "I must have beings who resemble me!" said Lautréamont.

His pagan zeal is the fervor of a soul which remembers its origins. He is not seeking a return to Nature, à la Rousseau. Far from it. He is seeking grace. Had he been able to believe, he would have surrendered his soul long ago. It was his heart which was paralyzed. Those duologues which he held with his sister at the hospital resume not only the question which held him in suspense all his life but the quest. She believes so sincerely and implicitly, why can't he? Are they not of the same blood? He no longer asks *why* she believes, only—*do you?* This is the final leap for which he has to muster all his strength. It is the leap out of himself, the bursting of the bonds. It is no longer important now *what* he believes in, only—*to believe*. In one of those alternations of mood which characterize the *Season in Hell*, after an exalted outburst in which he maintains that reason is born in him again, that he sees the world is good, blesses life, loves his fellow-man, he adds: "*Ce ne sont plus des promesses d'enfance. Ni l'espoir d'échapper à la vieillesse et à la mort. Dieu fait ma force et je loue Dieu.*" This God who is man's strength is neither a Christian god nor a pagan god. He is simply God. He is accessible to all men of whatever race, breed or culture. He may be found in any place at any time, without benefit of mediation. He is Creation itself and will continue to exist whether man believes or not.

But the more creative a man is, the more certain he is to recognize his Maker. Those who resist most stoutly merely testify the more to His existence. The struggle against is as valiant as the struggle for; the difference lies in the fact that the one who struggles against has his back to the light. He is fighting his own shadow. It is only when this shadow play exhausts him, when finally he falls prostrate, that the light which sweeps over him can reveal to him the splendors which he had mistaken for phantoms. This is the surrender of pride and egotism which is demanded of all, great or small.

An artist earns the right to call himself a creator only when he admits to himself that he is but an instrument. "Author, creator, poet! That man has not yet existed." Thus spake Rimbaud in the arrogance of youth. But he was voicing a profound truth. Man creates nothing of and by himself. All is created, all has been foreseen . . . and yet there is freedom. Freedom to sing God's praises. This is the highest performance man can enact; when he acts thus he takes his place by the side of his Creator. This is his liberty and salvation, since it is the only way to say Yea to life. God wrote the score, God conducts the orchestra. Man's role is to make music with his own body. Heavenly music, *bien entendu*, for all else is cacophany.

"J'ai fait la magique étude
Du bonheur, qu'aucun n'élude.

Salut à lui chaque fois
Que chante le coq gaulois."

* * *

No sooner had the cadaver been shipped home than Rimbaud's mother slipped off to arrange the funeral obsequies. His withered, mutilated body riddled with the marks of his agonies is shovelled under in jig time. It was as though she were ridding herself of the pest. She probably fumigated the house on her return from the cemetery whither she and his sister Isabelle had followed the hearse: these two, no more, composed the cortège. Rid of the "genius" at last, Madame Rimbaud could now devote herself in peace to the animals and the crops, to the petty rounds of her petty provincial life.

What a mother! The very incarnation of stupidity, bigotry, pride and stubbornness. Whenever the harassed genius threatened to accommodate himself to his hell, whenever his tormented spirit flagged, she was there to jab him with the pitchfork or pour a bit of burning oil on his wounds. It was she who thrust him out into the world, she who denied him, betrayed him, persecuted him. She even robbed him of that privilege which every Frenchman craves—the pleasure of having a good funeral.

The body finally delivered up to the worms, Rimbaud returns to the dark kingdom, there to search for his true mother. In life he knew only this witch, this harridan from whose loins he sprang like the missing wheel of a clock. His revolt from her tyranny and stupidity converted him into a solitary. His affective nature completely maimed, he was forever incapable of giving or receiving love. He knew only how to oppose will to will. At best he knew pity, never love.

In his youth we see him as a zealot, a fanatic. No compromise. Only the *volte-face*. As the revolutionary, he seeks desperately for an ideal society in which he can staunch the wound of separation. This is the mortal wound from which he never recovers. He becomes an absolutist, since nothing can bridge the void between the actual and the ideal but a perfection in which all error and falsity are swallowed up. Only perfection can blot out the memory of a wound which runs deeper than the river of life.

Incapable of adapting or of integrating, he seeks endlessly—only to discover that it is *not* here, *not* there, *not* this, *not* that. He learns the not-ness of everything. His defiance remains the one positive thing in the void of negation in which he flounders. But defiance is unfruitful; it saps all inner strength.

This negation begins and ends with the creature world, with those experiences *sans suite* which teach nothing. No matter how vast his experience of life, it never goes deep enough for him to give it meaning. The rudder is gone, and the anchor too. He is condemned to drift. And so the

vessel which goes aground on every shoal and reef, which submits helplessly to the buffetings of every storm, must go to pieces finally, become mere flotsam and jetsam. He who would sail the sea of life must become a navigator; he must learn to reckon with wind and tide, with laws and limits. A Columbus does not flout the laws, he extends them. Nor does he set sail for an imaginary world. He discovers a new world accidentally. But such accidents are the legitimate fruits of daring. This daring is not recklessness but the product of inner certitude.

The world which Rimbaud sought as a youth was an impossible world. He made it full, rich, vibrant, mysterious—to compensate for the lack of these qualities in the world he was born into. The impossible world is a world which even the gods never inhabited; it is the Land of Nod which the infant seeks when it has been denied the breast. (It is here the zebus dream probably, and all those other strange animals which dot the shores of the Dead Sea.) Awake, the impossible can only be gained by assault, and the name for this is madness. It may be, as some aver, that it was at the barricades, during the bloody Commune, that Rimbaud swerved from this fatal course. All we know is that suddenly, at the edge of the precipice, he shies away. Definitely *not that!* He behaves as one who has seen through the lies and the delusions. He is not going to be a dupe, a cat's paw. The revolution is as empty and revolting as the every-day life of conformance and submission. Society is nothing but an aggregation of hopeless dolts, scoundrels and fiends. Henceforth he will have faith in nothing but himself. If necessary, he will eat his own dirt. Soon now begins the flight, the aimless wandering, the rudderless drift. All those sordid, despicable realities which he would have none of now become his every-day fare. It is the beginning of the descent, and no thread to guide him out of the dark labyrinth.

The only salvation he recognizes is liberty. And liberty for him is death, as he will discover.

No one has better illustrated the truth than Rimbaud, that the freedom of the isolated individual is a mirage. Only the emancipated individual knows freedom. This freedom is *earned*. It is a gradual liberation, a slow and laborious fight in which the chimeras are exorcised. The chimeras are never slain, for phantoms are only as real as the fears which call them forth. To know oneself, as Rimbaud once counselled in that famous *Letter of the Seer*, is to rid oneself of the demons which possess one. The Church did not invent these terrors of the mind and soul, nor does society create the restrictions which irk and plague one. One church is overthrown and another is set up; one form of society is abolished and another springs up. The powers and emanations persist. Rebels create only new forms of tyranny. Whatever man suffers as an individual all men suffer as members

of society. (Abelard came to see that even in the death of a rabbit God also suffers.)

"Everything we are taught is false," Rimbaud protested in his youth. He was right, utterly right. But it is our mission on earth to combat false teaching by manifesting the truth which is in us. Even single-handed we can accomplish miracles. But the great miracle is to unite all men in the way of understanding. The key *is* Charity. The lies, the falsities; the deceptions, cruel as they are, must be lived through and overcome through integration. The process goes by the hard name of sacrifice.

When Rimbaud denied the inner reality for the outer he put himself in the hands of the dark powers which rule the earth. By refusing to transcend the conditions he was born into he surrendered himself to the stagnant flux. For him the clock did really stop. From then on "he killed time," as we say with unthinking accuracy. No matter how active, the barometer can only register boredom. His activity merely emphasizes his unrelatedness. He is part of the void which he once tried to span with the unsubstantial rainbow of perfection. The Jacob's Ladder of his dreams, once peopled with heralds and messengers from the other world, dissolves. The phantoms take on substance. They become altogether too real, in fact. They are now no longer figments of the imagination but materialized forces of hallucinating reality. He has invoked the aid of powers which refuse to be relegated to the misty deep from which they sprang. Everything is borrowed, everything is vicarious. He is no longer an actor but an agent, or a re-agent. In the world of the imagination he had boundless freedom; in the creature world he has empty power, empty possessions. Now he sits neither in the Councils of the Lord nor in the Councils of the Lords: he is in the web of the Powers and Principalities. There is no peace, no surcease from toil. Loneliness and enslavement are his lot. Does an army need rifles? He will supply them—at a profit. It doesn't matter which army, whose army—he will sell to any one who wishes to kill. Kill and be killed, it's all one to him. Is there a market in salves? He has dealt in coffee, spices, gums, ostrich feathers, muskets . . . why not slaves too? *He* never ordered men to kill one another, nor did he command them to be slaves. But since it *is* so, he will make the most of it. With a nice, clean profit he may possibly retire one day and marry an orphan.

There is nothing too unclean, too unsavory, for him to traffick in. What does it matter? It is no longer *his* world. No, definitely not. It is the world he walked out on—only to enter by the back door. How familiar everything looks now! And that odor of *pourriture*, why, it's positively nostalgic! Even that peculiar smell of burnt horse flesh—or is it his own hide?—is familiar to his nostrils. Thus, as in a mirror darkly, the phantom denizens of his once profound disgust parade before his eyes. He has never injured

a soul. No, not he. He even tried to do a little good when he could. Perfectly so. All his life he got nothing but the dirty end of the stick . . . is he to be censured now if he tries to get something for himself, a little of the gravy which is running over but which is always out of reach? So he soliloquizes in the depths of Abyssinia. It is the human giraffe talking to himself in the tall grass of the open veldt. Well may he ask now: "*Qu'est mon néant, auprès de la stupeur qui vous attend?*" What made him superior is that he had no heart. Is it surprising that a man "*sans coeur*," as he used to sign himself, can spend eighteen years of his life eating his heart out? Baudelaire merely laid his heart bare; Rimbaud plucks his out and devours it slowly.

And so the world gradually comes to resemble the time of the curse. The birds drop from the air, dead before they arrive. The wild beasts gallop to the sea and plunge. The grass withers, the seed rots. Nature takes on the barren, deformed look of a miser, and the heavens mirror the emptiness of the earth. The poet, jaundiced from riding the wild mare over lakes of steaming asphalt, slits its throat. In vain he flaps his rudimentary wings. The fabulous opera collapses and a howling wind rends the props. Save for the furious and most ancient witches, the heath is deserted. Like harpies, armed each and every one with grappling hooks, they fall upon him. Theirs is a more earnest greeting than that visionary brush with his Satanic Majesty. Nothing lacks now to complete the concert of hells he once begged for.

Est-ce la vie encore? Qui sait? On est là enfin, c'est tout ce qu'on peut dire. On va où l'on pèse. Oui. On y va, on y arrive. Et le bateau coule à pic. . . .

* * *

In attempting to conquer his demon (the angel in disguise), Rimbaud lived a life such as his worst enemy might have decreed as penalty for attempted evasion from the ranks. It was both the shadow and the substance of his imaginary life, which was rooted in innocence. It was the virgin quality of his soul which made him unadaptable and which, characteristically, led him to a new form of madness—the desire for *total* adaptation, *total* conformity. It is the same old absolutism erupting through the shell of negation. The angel-demon duality, which he finds impossible to resolve, becomes fixed. The only solution is dissolution through number. Unable to be himself, he can become an infinitude of personalities. Jacob Boehme expressed it long ago when he said: "Who dies not before he dies is ruined when he dies." This is the fate which confronts the modern man: rooted in the flux, he does not die but crumbles like a statue, dissolves, passes away into nothingness.

But there is another aspect to Rimbaud's exaggerated worldliness. His

desire to possess the truth *in body and soul* is the longing for that nether Paradise which Blake called Beulah. It represents the state of grace of the fully conscious man who, by accepting his Hell unconditionally, discovers a Paradise of his own creation. This is resurrection *in the flesh*. It means that man at last becomes responsible for his fate. Rimbaud tried to re-situate man on the earth, *this earth*, and completely. He refused to recognize an eternity of the spirit created out of dead bodies. Similarly, he refused to recognize an ideal society composed of soul-less bodies manipulated from their political or economic centers. That terrifying energy which he manifested throughout his career was the creative spirit working through him. If he denies Father and Son he does not deny the Holy Ghost. It is creation he worships, creation he exalts. Out of this fever comes the "need for destruction" sometimes alluded to. It is not a wanton, vengeful destruction that Rimbaud urged, but a clearing of the ground so that fresh shoots may spring up. His whole aim is to give the spirit free rein. Again, by refusing to name, define or delimit the true God, he was endeavoring to create what might be called a plenary vacuum in which the imagination of God could take root. He has not the vulgarity or familiarity of the priest who knows God and talks to Him every day. Rimbaud knew that there was a higher communion of spirit with spirit. He knew that communion is an ineffable duologue which takes place in utter silence, reverence and humility. He is in this respect much nearer to adoration than to blasphemy. His was the enlightenment of those who demand that salvation make sense. The "rational song of the angels"—is it not the persuasion to immediate effort? Postponement is the devil's tune, and with it is always administered the drug of effortlessness.

"How boring! What am I doing here?" writes Rimbaud in one of his letters from Abyssinia. "*What am I doing here?*" That cry of despair epitomizes the plight of the earth-bound. Speaking of the long years of exile which Rimbaud had prophesied for himself in the *Season*, Edgell Rickword remarks: "What he sought when he broke out from his human shell was the means with which to sustain himself in the condition of transcendent purity, of god-like disillusionment in which he emerged." But one never breaks out of this human shell, even in madness. Rimbaud was more like a volcano which, having spent its fires, becomes extinct. If he did emerge at all it was to cut himself off at the height of adolescence. There he remains, poised on the peak, a sort of *jeune roi soleil*.

This refusal to mature, as we view it, has a quality of pathetic grandeur. Mature into *what*? we can imagine him asking himself. Into a manhood which spells enslavement and emasculation? He had blossomed prodigiously, but—to *flower*? To flower meant to expire in corruption. He elects to die in the bud. It is the supreme gesture of youth triumphant. He will

permit his dreams to be massacred, but not to be sullied. He had had a glimpse of life in its splendor and fullness; he would not betray the vision by becoming a domesticated citizen of the world. "*Cette âme égarée parmi nous tous*"—that is how he described himself more than once.

Alone and bereft, he carried his youth to the uttermost limits. He not only commands this realm as it had never before been commanded, but he exhausts it—all that we know of it, at least. The wings with which he soared rot with him in the tomb of the chrysalis from which he refused to emerge. He dies in the womb of his own creation, intact, but in limbo. This quality of the unnatural is his special contribution to the saga of renunciatory acts. It has a monstrous flavor, as "the part of fortune" always has when usurped by the demon. The element of arrest (Narcissism), which is another aspect of the picture, introduces a fear greater than all others—the loss of identity. This threat, which was ever with him, condemned his soul to that oblivion it once despaired of ever attaining. The dream world enfolds him, smothers him, stifles him: he becomes the mummy embalmed by his own artifices.

I like to think of him as the Columbus of Youth, as the one who extended the boundaries of that only partially explored domain. Youth ends where manhood begins, it is said. A phrase without meaning, since from the beginning of history man has never enjoyed the full measure of youth nor known the limitless possibilities of adulthood. How can one know the splendor and fullness of youth if one's energies are consumed in combating the errors and falsities of parents and ancestors? Is youth to waste its strength unlocking the grip of death? Is youth's only mission on earth to rebel, to destroy, to assassinate? Is youth only to be offered up for sacrifice? What of the *dreams* of youth? Are they always to be regarded as follies? Are they to be populated only with chimeras? Dreams are the shoots and buds of the imagination: they have the right to lead pure lives also. Stifle or deform youth's dreams and you destroy the creator. Where there has been no real youth there can be no real manhood. If society has come to resemble a collection of deformities, is it not the work of our educators and preceptors? To-day, as yesterday, the youth who would live his own life has no place to turn, no place to live his youth unless, retiring into his chrysalis, he closes all apertures and buries himself alive. The conception of our mother the earth being "an egg which doth contain all good things in it" has undergone a profound change. The cosmic egg contains an addled yolk. That is the present view of mother earth. The psychoanalysts have traced the poison back to the womb, but to what avail? In the light of this profound discovery we are given permission, as I see it, to step from one rotten egg into another. If we believe this it is true, but whether we believe it or not it is pure, unmitigated hell. It is said of Rimbaud that "he scorned

the highest satisfactions of our world." Are we not to admire him for that? Why swell the ranks of death and decay? Why breed new monsters of negation and futility? Let society scotch its own rotten corpse! Let us have a new heaven and a new earth!—that was the sense of Rimbaud's obstinate revolt.

Like Columbus, Rimbaud set forth in search of a new route to the Promised Land. The Promised Land of Youth! In his own miserable youth he had fed on the Bible and on the Robinson Crusoe sort of books which children are given to read. One of these, one he was particularly fond of, was called *L'Habitation du Désert*. Singular coincidence, that even as a child he is dwelling in that desert which is to be the substance of his life. Did he then, even in that remote time, see himself apart and alone, stranded on a reef, decivilizing himself?

If any man saw with the right and the left eye it was Rimbaud. I speak naturally of the eyes of the soul. With the one he had the power of seeing into eternity; with the other he had the power of seeing into "time and the creatures," as it is written in *The Little Book of the Perfect Life*.

"But these two eyes of the soul of man cannot both perform their work at once," it is said. "If the soul shall see with the right eye into eternity, then the left eye must close itself and refrain from working, and be as though it were dead."

Did Rimbaud close the wrong eye? How else are we to account for his amnesia? That other self which he put on like a suit of armor in order to do battle with the world, did it make him invulnerable? Even armored like a crab, he is as unfit for Hell as he was for Paradise. In no condition, no realm, was it possible for him to remain anchored; he can get a toe-hold but never a foot-hold. As though pursued by the Furies, he is driven relentlessly from one extreme to the other.

In some respects he was as un-French as it is possible to be. But in nothing was he more un-French than in his youthfulness. In him the *gauche*, callow traits which the French loathe were combined to an extraordinary degree. He was as incongruous as a Viking would have been in the court of Louis XIV. "To create a new nature and a correspondingly new art" were, as has been said, his two ambitions. For the France of his day such ideas were as valid and tenable as the worship of a Polynesian idol. Rimbaud has explained, in the letters from Africa, how impossible it was for him to resume the life of a European; he confessed that even the language of Europe had become alien to him. In thought and being he was closer to Easter Island than to Paris, London or Rome. The savage nature which he had manifested from childhood developed more and more with the years; it revealed itself more in his compromises and concessions than in his revolt. He remains the outsider always, playing a lone hand, scornful

of the ways and methods he is obliged to adopt. He shows more desire to trample on the world than to conquer over it.

While the zebus dreamed he dreamt too, be sure of it. Only we do not know those dreams of his. We hear only of his complaints and demands, not of his hopes and prayers; we know his scorn and bitterness, but not his tenderness, his longing. We see him preoccupied with a multitude of practical details and we assume that he had killed the dreamer. Yes, it is possible that he stifled his dreams—since they were too grandiose. It is also possible that he played at being sane with the cunning of a super-madman—rather than expire at those radiant horizons which he had opened up. What do we know actually of his interior life in the latter years? Nothing, practically. He had closed up. When he rouses himself it is only to emit a growl, a whine, a curse.

To the anabasis of youth he opposed the katabasis of senility. There was no in-between realm—except the false maturity of the civilized man. The in-between was also the realm of limitations—*cowardly* limitations. No wonder that he saw the saints as strong men, the hermits as artists. They had the strength to live apart from the world, defiant of all but God. They were not worms who bowed and groveled, who said yes to every lie for fear of losing their peace or security. Nor did they fear, to lead a totally new life! However, to live apart from the world was not Rimbaud's desire. He loved the world as few men have. Wherever he went his imagination preceded him, opening up glorious vistas which of course always turned out to be mirages. He was concerned only with the unknown. To him the earth was not a dead place reserved for penitent, sorrowful souls who have given up the ghost, but a live, throbbing, mysterious planet where men, if they but realize it, may dwell as kings. Christianity had made of it an eye-sore. And the march of progress was a dead march. About face, then! Resume where the Orient in its splendor left off! Face the sun, salute the living, honor the miracle! He saw that science had become as great a hoax as religion, that nationalism was a farce, patriotism a fraud, education a form of leprosy, and that morals were for cannibals. With every piercing shaft he hit the bull's eye. No one had keener vision, truer aim, than the golden-haired boy of seventeen with the periwinkle blue eyes. *A bas les vieillards! Tout est pourri ici.* He fires point-blank right and left. But he has no sooner laid them low than they stare him in the face again. It is no use shooting at clay pigeons, he thinks to himself. No, the task of demolition demands deadlier weapons. But where is he to get them? At what arsenal?

It is here that the Devil must have stepped in. One can imagine the words he chose . . . "Keep on this way and you'll land in the bug-house. Do you suppose you can kill the dead? Leave that to me, the dead are my meat. Besides, you haven't even begun to live. With your talents the world is

yours for the asking. What makes you superior is that you have no heart. Why linger among these rotting, walking cadavers?" To which Rimbaud must have said: "*D'accord!*" Proud, too, that he had wasted no words, man of reason that he was. But, unlike Faust who had inspired him, he forgot to ask the price. Or perhaps he was so impatient that he did not wait to hear the terms of the bargain. It is even possible that he was so naive that he did not suspect there *was* a bargain. For he was always innocent, even as a lost one. It is his innocence which leads him to believe that there is a Promised Land where youth reigns. He believes it even though his hair turns gray. Even when he leaves the farm at Roche for the last time it is not with the idea of dying on a hospital bed in Marseilles but to set sail again for foreign lands. Always his face is turned towards the sun. *Soleil et chair. Et à l'aube c'est le coq d'or qui chante.* In the distance, like an ever-receding mirage, *les villes splendides.* And in the sky the peoples of the earth marching, marching. Everywhere fabulous operas, his own and other men's: creation yielding to creation, paean succeeding paean, infinitude swallowing infinitude. *Ce n'est pas le rêve d'un hachâche, c'est le rêve d'un voyant.*

His was the most terrible deception I know of.* He asked for more than any man dared and he received infinitely less than he deserved. Corroded by his own bitterness and despair, his dreams turned to rust. But for us they remain as pure and untarnished as the day they were born. Of the corruption he passed through not a single ulcer adheres. All is white, glistening, tremulous and dynamic, purified by the flames. More than any poet he lodges himself in that vulnerable place called the heart. In all that is broken—a thought, a gesture, a deed, a life—we find the proud Prince of the Ardennes. May his soul rest in peace!

Coda

Rimbaud was born in the middle of the 19th Century, October 20th, 1854, at 6.00 A. M., it is said. A century of unrest, of materialism, and of "progress," as we say. Purgatorial in every sense of the word, and the writers who flourished in this period reflect this ominously. Wars and revolutions were abundant. Russia alone, we are told, waged thirty-three wars (mostly of conquest) during the 18th and 19th centuries. Shortly after Rimbaud is born his father is off to the Crimean War. So is Tolstoi. The revolution of 1848, of brief duration but full of consequences, is followed by the bloody Commune of 1870, which Rimbaud as a boy is thought to have participated in. In 1848 we in America are fighting the Mexicans with whom we are now great friends, though the Mexicans are not too sure of it. During this war Thoreau makes his famous speech on Civil Disobedience, a docu-

* There is one utterance which sums it up: "*Toute lune est atroce et tout soleil amer.*"

ment which will one day be added to the Emancipation Proclamation—as a rider. Twelve years later the Civil War breaks out, perhaps the bloodiest of all civil wars—but see what we gained! From 1847 until his death in 1881, Amiel is writing his *Journal Intime*, which is the log-book of the sick man of Europe erroneously called Turkey. It gives a thorough-going analysis of the moral dilemma in which the creative spirits of the time found themselves. The very titles of the books written by the influential writers of the 19th Century are revelatory. I give just a few . . . *The Sickness Unto Death* (Kierkegaard), *Dreams and Life* (Gérard de Nerval), *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Baudelaire), *Les Chants de Maldoror* (Lautréamont), *The Birth of Tragedy* (Nietzsche), *La Bête Humaine* (Zola), *Hunger* (Knut Hamsun), *Les Lauriers Sont Coupés* (Dujardin), *The Conquest of Bread* (Kropotkin), *Looking Backward* (Edward Bellamy), *Alice in Wonderland* (Lewis Carroll), *The Serpent in Paradise* (Sacher-Masoch), *Les Paradis Artificiels* (Baudelaire), *Dead Souls* (Gogol), *The House of the Dead* (Dostoevski), *The Wild Duck* (Ibsen), *The Inferno* (Strindberg), *The Nether World* (Gissing), *A Rebours* (Huysmans) . . .

Goethe's *Faust* was not so very old when Rimbaud asked a friend for a copy of it. Remember, the date of his birth is October 20th, 1854. (6.00 A. M. Western Standard Diabolical Time.) The very next year, 1855, *Leaves of Grass* makes its first appearance, followed by general condemnation. In 1860 Baudelaire's work on *les stupefiants* appears, also followed by condemnation and suppression. Meanwhile *Moby Dick* had come out (1851) and Thoreau's *Walden* (1854). In 1855 Gérard de Nerval commits suicide, having lasted till the remarkable age of 47. In 1854 Kierkegaard is already penning his last words to history, in which he gives us the parable of "The Sacrificed Ones." Just four or five years before Rimbaud completes *A Season in Hell* (1873), Lautréamont publishes privately his celebrated piece of blasphemy, another "work of youth," as we say, in order not to take these heart-breaking testaments seriously. (How many authors in this 19th Century publish their first works privately!) By 1888 Nietzsche is explaining to Brandes that he can now boast of three readers: Brandes, Taine and Strindberg. The next year he goes mad and remains that way until his death in 1900. Lucky man! From 1893 to 1897 Strindberg is experiencing a *crise*, as the French put it, which he describes with magistral effects in the *Inferno*. Reminiscent of Rimbaud is the title of another of his works: *The Keys to Paradise*. In 1888 comes Dujardin's curious little book, forgotten until recently. In the same year Edward Bellamy's Utopian document is published. By this time Mark Twain is at his height, *Huckleberry Finn* having appeared in 1884, the same year as *Against the Grain* of Huysmans. By the fall of 1891, the year of Rimbaud's death, Knut Hamsun is directing discussions in which "the right of the obscure and the mysterious

in literature" is being fought over. In that same year Gissing's *New Grub Street* is launched. It is an interesting year in 19th Century literature, this year of Rimbaud's death; it ends a decade in which a number of writers important to the 20th Century are born. Here are a few titles of books which appeared in the year of 1891, curious books in that they differ so widely one from another. . . . *Gösta Berling*, *The Light that Failed*, *The Little Minister*, *The Picture of Dorian Grey*, *Les Cahiers d'André Walter*, *Le Livre de la Pitié et de la Mort*, *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, *Là-Bas*, *The Fruits of Civilization*, *The End of Sodom*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Sixtine (roman de la vie cérébrale)* . . .

What a century of names! Let me include a few I have not mentioned . . . Shelley, Blake, Stendhal, Hegel, Fechner, Emerson, Poe, Schopenhauer, Max Stirner, Mallarmé, Tchekov, Andrejev, Verlaine, Couperus, Maeterlinck, Madame Blavatsky, Samuel Butler, Claudel, Unamuno, Conrad, Bakunin, Shaw, Rilke, Stefan George, Mary Baker Eddy, Verhaeren, Gautier, Leon Bloy, Balzac, Yeats . . .

What revolt, what disillusionment, what longing! Nothing but crises, break-downs, hallucinations and visions. The foundations of politics, morals, economics and art tremble. The air is full of warnings and prophecies of the débâcle to come—and in the 20th Century it comes! Already two world wars and a promise of more before the century is out. Have we touched bottom? Not yet. The moral crisis of the 19th Century has merely given way to the spiritual bankruptcy of the 20th. It is "the time of the assassins," and no mistaking it. Politics has become the business of gangsters. The peoples are marching in the sky but they are not shouting hosannahs; those below are marching towards the bread lines. *C'est—l'aube exaltée ainsi qu'un peuple de colombes* . . .

THREE POEMS

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

CAMINO REAL

for Jay

1. *The Jockeys at Hialeah*

At night the drawn blinds
 are light blue instead of green
and hydrants galore give issue to much green water,
 tumble and hum
 with sometimes two in a tub,
with white linen towels or white tissue sprinkled with talcum
in white-washed cottages where the jockeys are paddocked
 five in a row,
 in sight and sound of the depot. . . .

And everywhere back of the innocent silk of the blinds
in the shot-gun cottages, scented with Florida water,
 the hop-toads devote some intervals to the comics,
absorbing the prat-fall with the cosmic projectile,
the villainous domino with the leopard-skin drawers. . . .

But a listener hears,
 if he is expectant and still,
the infinitesimal tick of filaments in light-bulbs
 springing out of position,
 fifty-watt Mazdas giving up steady white ghosts

And after long intervals—talk,
 subdued exclamations!
But couldn't distinguish surprise from indignation,
 quit from will you?

Smelling hot oranges in the Loop of the Chicago . . .

The Loop is the way the crow flies
between kids' giggles and light-hearted cohabitation,
between jam-sessions and bedrooms at the Blackstone
 (with light-bulbs that swing delightedly as you do,
 somewhere between Arch-deacons and the Voo-doo!)

WILLIAMS

But Electric avenue stops for Nooooo *BODY!*—who doesn't believe
one number comes twice in two throws,
or thinks God's ignorant of the chance He's taking!

2. *The Sunshine Special*

The Sunshine Special has deposited you under skies of pink tissue paper
which little girls' scissors will cut into gap-toothed grins and triangular eyes.

The cut-out sections, looped over telephone wires, will be irritably
brushed aside in the rush for entrances.

And you will stop short, coming out of the railroad depot
thinking you heard your name called,
which is thought-transference, because—

The face of your love is chalk-white!

She has taken poison.

The fire-department has been called out
to revive her.

Her dresses collected grass-stains after soft-drink parlors
and her brother's picture's
a sailor between Hula girls in Honolulu

framed in forget-me-nots on the ivory bureau.

Her scent is from Liggett's, in half-ounce bottles, the colors
of what the Mexicans call *refrescos y helados*,
vended between the deaths of bulls on Sundays.

She dies likewise eight times between *sol y sombra*
and is hauled by a team of horses across an arena,

but eight times revives and comes back plunging again,
to meet your banderillos with blood-shot eyes.

Her hands are like ice and she has called for you twice!

But at five o'clock in the Dutch blue afternoon,
she is out of danger and you are out of Miami
with all the free pussy there is in a land of plenty!

Ah, but your silver victrola
which talked of your losses before it was also lost,

WILLIAMS

which grieved for your grief before it was also grieved for—
Heavy, heavy hangs over your head and your heart,
and whom will you meet on San Juan de Latrene to redeem it?

3. *The Doves of Aphrodite*

Anyhow now we stopped at a hop-toad's heaven,
one scrub pine and clean sheets without any questions,
Radios numbered as blackbirds in the king's pie!
Something all the time going on in the place—
Stud in the parlor,
pinochle on the back-porch,
something suspiciously humming and rattling upstairs
which Daisy explained
was a kind of electric contrivance
for curing inquisitive cats of their bad habits. . . .

But to believe in luxury isn't necessarily nor even probably
to lack dynamism,
and lots of babies who've never been properly weaned
from Hotel Statler room-service
can still make sing, or make like magnificent singing,
canaries in bed-springs,

Being wired to transmit equally well as to receive
currents of that blue stuff
which is come of creation,
the doves of Aphrodite's or anyone's car!

4. *Brass Bed*

The sun makes up with them after a silly quarrel.
Under the feigned and profaned look of magazine cuties,
Meridians BOOMED!
Coo-coo!
Shag ass to breakfast!

The situation involves a poppy kimono, intermittently opened to cool off
Bob—

But more of them know than you would suspect of knowing
the *faute-de-mieux*—convenience . . .

WILLIAMS

And evening makes a difference in a place.
Somebody buffs his shoes with a steady buff.
Somebody looks in a chiffonier for something
which turns out not to be there,
or if it is there, is not the right color or size
or proves in some other respect an unpleasant surprise.
Somebody thinks he is quicker than somebody's buddy who's bigger
and Heigh-ho,
off they both go
in the Black Maria!

Yes, evening makes a difference in a place
much like a drunkard's poem before his blond
calls—Waiter! Check! We're leaving. . . .
Bibulous sonnet, too deep for appreciation—

And bed's ENORMOUS!
Big as a fire-truck, rockets us to slumber,
hanging on brass-hinged ladders with far-away eyes . . .

RECUERDO

1. *The Bloodless Violets*

And he remembered the death of his grandmother
whose hands were accustomed to draw white curtains about him
before he moved to Electric avenue . . .

In childhood's spectrum of violence, she remained pale,
a drift of linen among tall, sunny chambers.

It was not ordained by God, nor any minister of Him,
that time should be caught in the withered crook of her elbow
or that she who would not

give injury to birds,
had nevertheless been called upon to carry
a cage full of swallows into an evil guest-chamber

Because her hands,
the knuckles of which were arthritic,
finger-tips number by winter,

WILLIAMS

could not disengage
the long-ago hair-pin twisted about the cage door . . .

But Spring's first almost bloodless violets were removed
from the washing-machine in the basement,
making it plain
why such a contagion of languor,
brought indoors with the laundry,
made visitors yawn.

Possibly also explaining why slumber's mischievous match-making
had put him to bed with young witches,
indistinct beings anonymous of gender,
some of them only a hollowness fastened upon his groin
and drawing, drawing,
the jelly out of his bones and leaving him only,
finally,
tenderly,
coldly—
the damp initial of Eros.

2. *Episode*

And then the long, long peltering schools of rain!

Ozzie, the black nurse,
tussles with the awnings,
a peppery kind of battle
in which she is worsted.
—Lightning,
her starched white skirt,
is yanked across heaven!
Aw, God, Mizz Williams!
—horse-liniment stung her,

And in the morning,
a telephone pole in our attic,
slippery, blanched—
A Mississippi tornado!

3. *The Paper Lantern*

My sister was quicker at everything than I.

At five she could say the multiplication tables
with barely a pause for breath,
while I was employed
with frames of colored beads in Kindy Garden.

At eight she could play
Idillio and The Scarf Dance
while I was chopping at scales and exercises.

At fifteen my sister
no longer waited for me,
impatiently at the White Star Pharmacy corner

But plunged head-long
into the discovery, Love!

Then vanished completely—

For love's explosion, defined as early madness,
consumingly shone in her transparent heart for a season
and burned it out, a tissue-paper lantern!

—torn from a string!
—tumbled across a pavilion!

flickering three times, almost seeming to cry . . .
My sister was quicker at everything than I.

LADY, ANEMONE

The body burned away the parting cloth.

As though a compass hand had pointed North,
He moved!

Storms, waterfalls, and tall men
move this way—

Tremendous impulse draws them,

WILLIAMS

not to stay!

Lady,

anemone,

violet-soft and kissing,

tender scabbard with a fierce blade missing—

You will awake to find a tall man gone,
his North become the morning.

Like a tear,

it trembles, hesitates, turns very clear,
illustrious morning, weather of his smile

Who brought, enveloped in a rainbow storm,
eleven fingers wanting to be warmed,
and having warmed them—

Lifted with a twist

that put you under him at least a mile!

For keepsakes leaving silver on a wrist,
gold on a finger,

bruises on your thigh . . .

It's only being tired that makes you cry.

Lake Chapala, Jalisco, Mexico

July, 1945.

LAUTREAMONT'S PREFACE
TO HIS UNWRITTEN VOLUME OF POEMS

TRANSLATED BY GUY WERNHAM

I replace melancholy with courage, doubt with certainty, despair with hope, evil with good, lamentations with duty, scepticism with faith, sophistry with the indifference of calm, and pride with modesty.

THE POETIC whimperings of this century are nothing but sophistry.

First principles should be beyond argument.

I accept Euripides and Sophocles; but I do not accept Aeschylus.

Do not manifest toward the Creator a lack of the most elementary conventions and good taste.

Cast aside disbelief: you will make me happy.

Only two kinds of poetry exist; there is only one.

A far from tacit convention exists between author and reader, by which the former calls himself the sick one, and accepts the latter as nurse. It is the poet who consoles humanity! The roles are arbitrarily inverted.

I do not wish to be dubbed a *poseur*.

I shall leave behind no Memoirs.

Poetry is no more tempest than it is cyclone. It is a majestic and fertile river.

It is only by admitting the night physically that one is able to admit it morally. O, Nights of Young! How many headaches you have caused me!

One dreams only when asleep. These are words like the word dream, nothingness of life, terrestrial way, perhaps the preposition, the distorted tripod, which have permitted to creep into our souls that poetry dripping with weakness, resembling decay.

Disturbances, anxieties, depravities, death, exceptions in the physical or moral order, the spirit of negation, brutalities, hallucinations served by the will, tortures, destructions, upsets, tears, dissatisfactions, slaveries, deep-digging imaginations, novels, unexpected things, that which must not be done, the chemical peculiarities of the mysterious vulture who watches over the carrion of some dead illusion, precocious and abortive experiments, obscurities with flea-like armor, the terrible monomania of pride, the inoculation with deep stupors, the funereal prayers, the envies, betrayals, tyrannies, impieties, irritations, bitterness, aggressive insults, madness, spleen, rational terrors, strange uneasinesses which the reader would prefer not to feel, grimaces, neuroses, the bloody channels through which one

forces logic at bay, the exaggerations, absence of sincerity, the saws, the platitudes, the darkness, the gloom, the infantilisms which are worse than murders, the clan of court-of-assizes novelists, the tragedies, odes, melodramas, the extremes presented ad infinitum, reason whistled at with impunity, the smells of wet chicken, the sicklinesses, the frogs, squids, sharks, desert simooms, all that is somnambulist, cross-eyed, nocturnal, soporific, night-roving, viscous, talking-seal, equivocal, consumptive, spasmodic, aphrodisiac, anemic, obscure, hermaphrodite, bastard, albino, pederastic, phenomena of the aquaria and bearded-lady, the hours drunk with silent discouragement, fantasies, monsters, demoralizing syllogisms, ordures, that which does not reflect like a child, desolation, that intellectual manchineel-tree, perfumed cankers, camellia-like thighs, the guilt of a writer who rolls down the slope of nothingness and scorns himself with cries of joy, remorse, hypocrisy, the vague perspectives that crush you within their imperceptible networks, the serious spittings upon sacred axioms, vermin and their insinuating ticklings, insensate prefaces like those of Cromwell, Mlle. de Maupin and Dumas the Younger, the decays, impotencies, blasphemies, asphyxiations, stiflings, rages—before these disgusting charnel-houses, which I blush to mention, it is at last time to react against that which shocks us and so royally bows us down.

You are being perpetually driven out of your mind and caught in the trap of shadows constructed with so coarse a skill by egoism and self-esteem.

Taste is the fundamental quality which sums up all other qualities. It is the *ne plus ultra* of the intelligence. By it alone is genius the supreme health and balance of all the faculties. Villemain is thirty-four times more intelligent than Eugene Sue and Frederick Soulié. His preface to the Dictionary of the Academy will witness the death of Walter Scott's novels, of Fenimore Cooper's novels, of all novels possible and imaginable.

The novel is a false genre, because it describes passions for their own sakes: the moral conclusion is lacking. To describe passions is nothing; it suffices to be born part jackal, part vulture, part panther. We do not care for it. To describe them, like Corneille, in order to subject them to a high ethic, is a different matter. He who will refrain from doing the former, at the same time remaining capable of admiring and understanding those to whom it is given to do the latter, surpasses with all the superiority of virtue over vice him who does the former.

By this alone, were a teacher of the second grade to say to himself:

"Were they to give me all the treasures of the universe, I should not wish to have written novels like those of Balzac and Alexander Dumas," by this alone he is more intelligent than Alexander Dumas and Balzac. By this alone, if a pupil of the third grade is convinced that he must not sing physical and intellectual deformities, by this alone he is stronger, more

capable, more intelligent, than Victor Hugo, if he had written only novels, plays and letters.

Alexander Dumas *fil*s will never—no, never—make a prize-giving speech for a school. He does not know what morality is. Morality does not compromise. If he did make one, he should first strike out with a single stroke of the pen all he had written hitherto, beginning with his absurd Prefaces. Summon a jury of competent men: I maintain that a good second-grade pupil is smarter than he in no matter what, even on the *dirty* subject of courtesans.

The masterpieces of the French language are prize-giving speeches for schools, and academic speeches. Indeed, the instruction of youth is perhaps the finest practical expression of duty, and a good appreciation of the works of Voltaire (dwell upon the word "appreciation") is preferable to the works themselves. Naturally!

The best authors of novels and plays would in the end distort the famous idea of good, if the army of teachers, preservers of Right, did not constrain generations young and old to the path of honesty and of work.

In its personal name, and it must be despite it, I have just disowned, with an implacable will and a tenacity of iron, the hideous past of cry-baby humanity. Yes: I shall proclaim beauty upon a golden lyre, making allowances for goitrous unhappiness and stupid pride which pollute at its source the marshy poetry of this century. I shall trample underfoot the harsh stanzas of scepticism, which have no reason for existence. Judgment, once entered into the efflorescence of its energy, imperious and resolute, without hesitating one instant over the absurd uncertainties of misplaced pity, like a public prosecutor, prophetically condemns them. We must guard incessantly against purulent insomnia and atrabilious nightmares. I scorn and execrate pride, and the infamous voluptuousness of any irony become extinguisher, which set aside justness of thought.

Certain characters, excessively intelligent (there is no call for you to invalidate this with the recantations of a dubious taste) have flung themselves head first into the arms of evil. It was absinthe—savory, I do not believe, but harmful—that morally slew the author of *Rolla*. Woe unto the greedy! Scarcely has the English aristocrat entered into the years of discretion, than his harp is shattered beneath the walls of Missolonghi, having gathered on his way naught but the blossoms of drear annihilation bred by opium.

Although his was a genius greater than ordinary, if there had been during his time another poet, endowed as he was in similar proportions with exceptional intelligence, and capable of presenting himself like his rival, he would have been the first to confess the uselessness of his efforts to produce ill-assorted maledictions; and that the good exclusively is declared

by the voice of everyone alone worthy of appropriating our esteem. The fact is that there was no one successfully to rival him. Here is something that no one has said. Strange thing! Even upon rummaging through anthologies and books of his epoch, we find that no critic thought of outlining the foregoing strict syllogism. And it is not he who will surpass it, who could have invented it. One was so much filled with wonder and uneasiness, rather than considered admiration, before works written by a treacherous hand—works, however, which revealed the imposing manifestations of a mind which did not belong to the common run of men, and which found itself at ease amid the ultimate consequences of one of the less obscure problems which interest non-solitary hearts: good and evil. To no one is it given to approach extremes except either in one direction or another. This explains why it is that, while forever praising without mental reservation the marvelous intelligence which at every moment he manifests, he, one of the four or five beacons of humanity, has silently made his numerous reserves concerning applications and the unjustifiable use he has knowingly made of them. He should not have encroached upon the kingdoms of Satan.

The savage revolt of the Tropmanns, the Napoleons I, the Papavoinés, the Byrons, the Victor *Noirs*, and the Charlotte Cordays, shall be held at a distance in my stern regard. These great criminals with their diverse titles I brush aside with a gesture. Whom are they thinking to fool here, I ask, with an interposing slowness? O, hobby-horses of the hulks! Soap bubbles! Puppets in gold leaf! Worn-out strings! Let them draw near, the Conrads, the Manfreds, the Laras, the sailors who resemble the Corsair, the Mephistopheles, the Werthers, the Don Juans, the Fausts, the Iagos, the Rodins, the Caligulas, the Cains, the Iridions, the shrews in the manner of Colomba, the Ahrimans, the addle-brained heretical earth-spirits who ferment the blood of their victims in the sacred pagodas of Hindustan, the snake, the toad and the crocodile, gods considered abnormal in ancient Egypt, the sorcerers and the demoniac powers of the Middle Ages, the Prometheuses, the mythological Titans destroyed by the thunderbolts of Jupiter, the Evil Gods spewed out by the primitive imagination of savages—the whole clamorous series of pasteboard devils. With the certainty of overwhelming them, I seize and balance the lash of indignation and concentration, and I await these monsters firm-footed as their predestined conqueror.

There are down-at-heel writers, dangerous buffoons, quadron humbugs, gloomy mystifiers, actual madmen, who deserve to inhabit Bedlam. Their softening heads in which there is a screw loose, create giant phantoms which sink downward instead of rising. Rugged exercise, specious gymnastic. Away with you, grotesque nutmeg. Kindly remove yourselves from my presence, fabricators of dozens of forbidden riddles, in which I used

not previously to see at once, as I do now, the seam of the frivolous solution. Pathological case of overpowering egoism. Fantastic automata: point out to one another, my children, the epithet which puts them in their place.

If they existed somewhere in plastic reality they would be, despite their proven but deceptive intelligence, the opprobrium, the bitterness, of the planets which they inhabited, and the shame. Imagine them for a moment, gathered together with beings their equals. It is an uninterrupted succession of battles, undreamed-of by bulldogs, forbidden in France, by sharks, and by macrocephalic cachalots. There are torrents of blood in those chaotic regions abounding in hydras and minotaurs, whence the dove, utterly terrified, wings swiftly away. It is a mass of apocalyptic beasts, who know not what they do. There are the impacts of passions, irreconcilabilities and ambitions vying with the shrieks of impenetrable and unrestrained pride, of which no one may even approximately plumb the reefs and the depths.

But they shall impose themselves no longer upon me. To suffer is a weakness, when one can prevent it and do something better. To give vent to the sufferings of an unbalanced splendor—that is to demonstrate, O dying ones of the perverse marmozzini! still less resistance and courage. With my voice and my solemnity of the grand days, I recall you within my deserted halls, glorious hope. Come, sit by my side, wrapped in the cloak of illusion, upon the reasonable tripod of appeasement. Like a piece of cast-off furniture I chased you from my abode with scorpion-lashed whip. If you wish that I should be convinced that you have forgotten, in returning to my home, the miseries which, in the name of penances, I once caused you—then, by all that's holy, bring back with you that sublime procession—support me, I am swooning!—of offended virtues and their imperishable reparations.

I state with bitterness that there remain only a few drops of blood in the arteries of our consumptive epoch. Since the odious and particular whimperings, patented without guarantee of a trademark, of your Jean-Jacques Rousseaus, your Chateaubriands, your nurses in babies! panties like Obermann, through the other poets who have wallowed in corrupt slime, up to the dream of Jean-Paul, the suicide of Dolores of Ventimiglia, the Raven of Allan, the Infernal Comedy of the Pole, the bloody eyes of Zorilla, and the immortal cancer, the Carrion, once lovingly painted the morbid lover of the Hottentot Venus, the improbable sorrows created for itself by this century, in their monotonous and disgusting insistence, have made it consumptive.

Come—music.

Yes, good people, it is I who command you to burn upon a hot shovel, with a little brown sugar, the duck of doubt with its lips of vermouth, which, shedding in the midst of a melancholy struggle between good and evil, tears

that come not from the heart, causes everywhere without a pneumatic pump, the universal vacuum. This is the best thing you have to do.

Despair, feeding upon the foregone conclusion of its phantasmagoria, imperturbably guides the literary man to the mass abrogation of divine and social laws, and to theoretical and practical wickedness. In a word, causes the human backside to predominate in reasoning. Come, it's my turn to speak! I repeat, wickedness results, and eyes take on the hue of those of the damned. I shall not retract what I propose. I desire that my poetry may be read by a young girl of fourteen years.

Real sorrow is incompatible with hope. No matter how great that sorrow may be, hope raises it one hundred cubits higher. Very well, leave me in peace with the seekers. Down, down with the outlandish bitches, muddle-makers, *poseurs*. Whatever suffers, whatever dissects the mysteries surrounding us, does not hope. The poetry that disputes the necessary truths is less beautiful than that which does not dispute them. Indecisions ad infinitum, ill-used talent, loss of time: nothing is easier to verify.

To sing of Adamastor, Jocelyn, Rocambole, is puerile. It is not even that the author hopes that the reader infers that these rascally heroes—whom he himself betrays, emphasizing good in order to pass off descriptions of evil—will be pardoned. It is in the name of these same virtues, misunderstood by Frank, that we are anxious to support him, O mountebanks of incurable unease.

Do not behave as do these unchaste (in their eyes magnificent) explorers of melancholy, who find unknown things in their souls and their bodies!

Melancholy and sadness are already the beginnings of doubt; doubt is the beginning of despair; despair is the cruel beginning of varying degrees of wickedness. To convince yourself of this, read "Confession of a Child of the Century." The slope is fatal once we are launched upon it. We are sure to arrive at wickedness. Beware of the slope. Rip out evil by the roots. Trust not the cult of adjectives such as indescribable, crimson, incomparable, colossal, which shamelessly give the lie to the nouns they distort: they are pursued by lewdness.

Second-rate minds, like that of Alfred de Musset, are able stubbornly to thrust forward one or two of their faculties much farther than the corresponding faculties of first-rate minds—Lamartine, Hugo. We are in the presence of the derailment of an overturned locomotive. A nightmare holds the pen. Learn that the soul is composed of a score of faculties. Don't talk to me about these beggars with their outsize hats and their sordid rags!

Here is a method for proving the inferiority of Musset to the two other poets. Read to a young girl "Rolla" or "The Nights," "The Fools," of Cobb, or else the portraits of Gwynplaine and Dea or the speech of Thera-

menus of Euripides, translated into French verse by Racine. She starts, frowns, raises and lowers her hands without purpose like a drowning man; her eyes flash with greenish fires. Read to her "Prayer for All" by Victor Hugo. The effects are diametrically opposed. The kind of electricity is no longer the same. She bursts into peals of laughter, and asks for more.

Of Hugo, nothing will be left but poems about children, in which much badness is to be found.

"Paul and Virginia" shocks our deepest aspirations. Once upon a time, that episode, which exudes blackness from the first to the last page, made me gnash my teeth. I rolled on the carpet and kicked my wooden horse. The description of pain is nonsense. It must be shown in all its beauty. If that story had been told as a simple biography I should not attack it. It instantly changes character. Unhappiness becomes august through the impenetrable will of God who created it. But man should not create unhappiness in his books. This is to concentrate, with all strength, upon one side of things only. O, what maniacal raving!

Do not deny the immortality of the soul, the wisdom of God, the greatness of life, the order of the universe, physical beauty, family love, marriage, social institutions. Forget the funereal scribblers: Sand, Balzac, Alexandre Dumas, Musset, Du Ferrail, Feval, Flaubert, Baudelaire, Leconte and the "Blacksmiths' Strike!"

Communicate to your readers only the experience resulting from pain, which is no longer pain itself. Do not weep in public.

One must know how to wrest literary beauty from the very bosom of death; but these beauties do not belong to death. Here, death is only the occasional cause of them. Death is not the means; it is the end.

The immutable and necessary truths which make the glory of nations, and which doubt struggles in vain to shatter, began ages ago. They are things which should not be touched. Those who would make literary anarchy under pretext of novelty arrive at nonsense. One does not dare to attack God; one attacks the immortality of the soul. But the immortality of the soul itself is as old as the beginning of the world. What other belief will replace it, were it to be replaced? This will not be always a negation.

If one bear in mind the truth whence arise all other truths, the absolute goodness of God and his absolute ignorance of evil, sophistry breaks down of itself. And at the same time, that scarcely poetic literature based upon sophistry will break down too. All literature which disputes eternal axioms is condemned to live only upon itself. It is unjust. It devours its own liver. The *novissima verba* cause the handkerchiefless kids of the fourth grade to smile superbly. We have no right to question the Creator on any matter whatsoever.

If you are unhappy, do not tell the reader. Keep it to yourself.

If one were to correct sophistries according to the truths corresponding to those sophistries, only the correction would be true; while the work thus made over would have the right to call itself no longer false. The rest would be out of bounds of truth, with a trace of false, and consequently, necessarily considered null and void.

Personal poetry has had its day of relative jugglery and contingent contortions. Let us take up again the indestructible thread of impersonal poetry, abruptly severed since the birth of the ineffectual philosopher of Ferney, before the abortion of the great Voltaire.

It seems to be fine, sublime, under the pretext of humility or of pride, to dispute final causes, to falsify their stable and known consequences. Undeceive yourself, for there is nothing more stupid! Let us link together again the regular chain of past times; poetry is geometry par excellence. Since Racine, poetry has not progressed one millimeter. It has fallen backwards. Thanks to whom? To the Great Softheads of our epoch. Thanks to the Sissies—Chateaubriand, the Melancholy-Mohican; Senancourt, the Man-in-the-Petticoat; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the Sulky-Socialist; Edgar Poe, the Muckamuck-of-Alcoholic-Dreams; Mathurin, the Godfather-of-Shadows; Georges Sand, the Circumcised-Hermaphrodite; Théophile Gautier, the Incomparable-Grocer; Leconte, the Devil's-Captive; Goethe, the Weeping-Suicide; Sainte-Beuve, the Laughing-Suicide; Lamartine, the Tearful-Stork; Lermontoff, the Bellowing-Tiger; Victor Hugo, the Funereal-Greenstick; Mickiewicz, Satan's-Imitator; Musset, the Intellectual-Shirtless-Dandy; and Byron, the Hippopotamus-of-the-Infernal-Jungles.

Doubt has always existed in the minority. In this century it is in the majority. We inhale the violation of duty through the pores. This is to be seen only once; it will never be seen again.

The ideas of simple reason are so obscured at this time that the first thing that fourth grade teachers do when they teach their pupils—young poets with their mothers' milk still moist upon their lips—to make Latin verses, is to reveal to them in practice the name of Alfred de Musset. I ask you, now! Third grade teachers, then, in their classes, give for translation into Greek verse two bloody episodes. The first is the repulsive fable of the pelican. The second is the awful catastrophe that overtook the laborer. Of what use is it to contemplate evil? Is it not in the minority? Why turn the head of a schoolchild upon questions which, owing to their not having been understood, caused men such as Pascal and Byron to lose theirs?

A student told me that his second grade teacher had given his class, day after day, these two cadavers to translate into Hebrew verse. These wounds of animal and human nature made him sick for a month in an infirmary. As we were known to each other, he sent his mother for me. He told me, albeit naively, that his nights were troubled by persistent dreams. He

thought he saw an army of pelicans which threw themselves upon his bosom and rent it. Then they flew to a flaming cottage. They devoured the laborer's wife and his children. The laborer, his body blackened with burns, emerged from his home and engaged in an atrocious battle with the pelicans. They all flung themselves into the cottage, which collapsed in ruins. From the heap of rubbish he saw his teacher emerge bearing in one hand his heart, in the other a piece of paper upon which could be deciphered in sulphurous script the fables of the pelican and the laborer, just as Musset himself composed them. It was not easy at first to diagnose his sickness. I advised him to remain strictly silent, to speak of it to no one, above all to his teacher. I counseled his mother to take him home with her for a few days, assuring her that this would pass. And indeed, I was careful to visit him for a few hours every day, and it passed off.

Criticism must attack form, never the content of your ideas, of your phrases. Do as you please.

Sentiment is the most incomplete imaginable form of reasoning.

All the waters of the ocean would be insufficient to wash away one intellectual blood-stain.

(Translator's Note: Most of the "thoughts" contained in the second part which follows are verses, maxims or aphorisms, all famous, but inverted.)

II

Genius guarantees the faculties of the heart.

Man is no less immortal than the soul.

Great thoughts come from reason!

Fraternity is no myth.

Children born know nothing of life, not even its greatness.

In misfortune, friends increase.

Goodness, thy name is Man.

Here dwells the wisdom of the nations.

Each time I read Shakespeare it seems to me that I am dissecting the brain of a jaguar.

I shall set down my thoughts in orderly manner, by means of a plan without confusion. If they are correct, the first will be the consequence of the others. This is the true order. It marks my object by calligraphic disorder. I should honor my subject too much if I should not treat it with order. I wish to show that it is capable of this.

I do not accept evil. Man is perfect. The soul does not fall. Progress exists. God is irreducible. Antichrists, accusing angels, eternal sufferings, religions, are the products of doubt.

Dante, Milton, describing hypothetically the infernal regions, have proved that they were first class hyenas. The proof is excellent. The result is bad. Nobody buys their works.

Man is an oak. Nature does not consider him robust. It is not necessary that the universe take up arms to defend him. A drop of water is not sufficient for his preservation. Even should the universe protect him, it would not be more dishonored than that which does not protect him. Mankind knows that its reign has no death, that the universe has a beginning. The universe knows nothing: at most, it is a thinking reed.

I imagine Elohim to be cold rather than sentimental.

Love of a woman is incompatible with love of humanity. Imperfection should be rejected. Nothing is more imperfect than shared egoism. During life, defiance, recrimination, sermons written in dust, swarm. It is no longer the lover of Chimene; it is the lover of Graziella. It is no longer Petrarch; it is Alfred de Musset.

In death, a rock by the seashore, any lake, Fontainebleau forest, the island of Ischia, a workroom accompanied by a raven, a Star Chamber with a crucifix, a cemetery whence arises the beloved one beneath the rays of a moon which finally become irritating, some stanzas or a group of girls whose names are unknown come parading in their turn, giving the author the measure and expressing regrets. There is in the two cases no dignity whatsoever.

Error is an unhappy story.

Hymns to Elohim accustom vanity to concern itself not with worldly things. Such is the shield of hymns. They cause humanity to lose the habit of depending on authors. They abandon him. They call him mystic, eagle, and they perjure his mission. You are not the sought-for dove.

Anyone could contrive a literary luggage for himself by stating the contrary of what has been said by the poets of this century. He would replace their affirmations with negations. And vice versa. If it is ridiculous to attack first principles, it is more ridiculous to defend them against these same attacks. I shall not defend them.

Sleep is a blessing for some, a punishment for others. For all, it is a sanction.

If Cleopatra's morals had been shorter, the face of the world would have been changed. Her nose would not have increased in length.

Concealed actions are the most estimable. When I see so many in history, they please me greatly. They have not been altogether hidden. They have been known about. Their small appearances augment their merit. The finest thing is, that it has not been possible to conceal them.

The charm of death exists only for the brave.

Man is so great that his greatness shows itself above all in his refusal to

acknowledge his misery. A tree knows not its greatness. To be great is to know one's greatness. To be great is to refuse to acknowledge misery. Man's greatness refutes his miseries. Greatness of a king.

When I write down my thoughts, they do not escape me. This act reminds me of my strength, which I forget always. I teach myself in proportion to my enslaved thoughts. I strive only to understand the contradiction between my soul and nothingness.

The heart of man is a book, which I have learned to prize.

Not imperfect, not fallen, man is the greatest of mysteries.

I permit no one, not even Elohim, to doubt my sincerity.

We are at liberty to do good.

Judgment is infallible.

We are not at liberty to do evil.

Man is the conqueror of chimeras, the novelty of tomorrow, the regularity with which chaos groans, the subject of conciliation. He judges all. He is no imbecile. He is no earthworm. He is the repository of truth, the mass of certainty, the glory, not the outcast, of the universe. If he degrades himself, I praise him. If he praises himself, I praise him more. I conciliate him. He comes to the understanding that he is the angel's sister.

Nothing is incomprehensible.

Thought is no less clear than crystal. A religion, whose lies depend upon it, may cloud it for a moment, speaking of those effects which are long-lasting. Speaking of those effects of brief duration, the assassination of eight persons at a city's gates would certainly cloud it unto the destruction of evil. Thought soon regains its limpidity.

Poetry should have as its goal, practical truth. It enunciates the relationships existing between the first principles and the secondary truths of life. Each thing rests in its place. Poetry's mission is difficult. It does not involve itself with political happenings, with the manner of governing a people, does not allude to periods of history, to coups-d'état, to regicides, to court intrigues. It tells not of the battles between man and himself, his passions. It discovers the laws by which exist political theory, universal peace, Machiavellian refutations, the paper horns which compose the works of Proudhon, the psychology of humanity. A poet should be more useful than any member of his tribe. His work is the code of diplomats, of law-makers, of instructors of youth. We are far from Homer, Virgil, Klopstock, Camoens, from emancipated imaginations, contrivers of odes, fabricators of epigrams against divinity. Let us return to Confucius, to Buddha, to Socrates, to Jesus Christ, moralist who roamed the villages starving! In future it will be necessary to count on reason, which operates only on the faculties which preside over the category of phenomena of pure goodwill.

Nothing is more natural than to read "*Discours de la Méthode*" after having read "*Bérénice*." Nothing is less natural than to read "*Traité de l'Induction*" by Biechy, "*Problème du Mal*," by Naville, after having read "*Les Feuilles d'Automne*," "*Les Contemplations*." The transition loses itself. The spirit rebels against the ironmongery, the mystagogy. The heart is appalled by these pages scribbled by a puppet. This violence enlightens him. He closes the book. He lets fall a tear in memory of the savage authors. Contemporary poets have abused their intelligence. The philosophers have not abused theirs. Memory of the former will fade. The latter are classics.

Racine and Corneille would have been able to compose the works of Descartes, of Malebranche, of Bacon. The soul of the former is with that of the latter. Lamartine and Hugo would not have been capable of composing "*Traité de L'Intelligence*." The soul of the former is not adequate to those of the latter. Fatuity made them lose the central qualities. Lamartine and Hugo, although superior to Taine, possess only, as he does—it is hard to make this avowal—secondary faculties.

Tragedies inspire pity and terror through duty. This is something. It is bad. It is not as bad as is modern lyricism. The "*Medea*" of Legouve is preferable to the collection of the works of Byron, Capendu, Zaccone, Felix, Gagne, Gaboriau, Lacordaire, Sardou, Goethe, Ravignan, Charles Diguët. What writer among you, I pray, can bear—what is this? What are these uprisings of resistance?—the weight of the monologue of Augustus? The barbarous vaudevilles of Hugo do not proclaim duty. The melodramas of Racine, Corneille, the novels of La Calprenède, do proclaim it. Lamartine is capable of writing the "*Phèdre*" of Pradon; Hugo, the "*Wenceslas*" of Rotrou; Sainte-Beuve, the tragedies of La Harpe or Marmontel. Musset is able to invent proverbs. Tragedy is an involuntary mistake, admits struggle, is the first step towards good, will not appear in this work. It conserves its prestige. This is not true of sophistry,—after the metaphysical drivél of the autoparodists of my heroic-burlesque times is over and done with.

The principle of cults is pride. It is ridiculous to address Elohim, as did Job, Jeremiah, David, Solomon, Turquety. Prayer is a false act. The best way to please him is indirect, more in keeping with our strength. It consists in making our race happy. There are no two ways of pleasing Elohim. The idea of virtue is one. Since virtue in little is also virtue in much, I permit mention of the example of maternity. To please his mother, a son will not proclaim that he is good, radiant, that he will behave in a manner deserving of her praises. He will do otherwise. Instead of saying it himself, he will make her believe it by his deeds, he casts off that sadness which swells the dogs of the New World. We must not confuse Elohim's

goodness with triviality. Each is probable. Familiarity breeds contempt; veneration breeds the contrary. Work destroys the abuse of feelings.

No reasoner believes contrary to his reason.

Faith is a natural virtue by which we accept the truths revealed to us by Elohim through conscience.

I know of no greater blessing than to have been born. An impartial spirit finds it complete.

Good is victory over evil, the negation of evil. If one sings the good, evil is eliminated by this adequate act. I do not sing what one must not do. I sing what one must do. The former does not contain the latter. The latter does not contain the former.

Youth pays heed to the counsels of mature age. It has an unlimited confidence in itself.

I know of no obstacle to oppose the strength of the human spirit, excepting truth.

Maxims have no need of it for proof. An argument demands an argument. A maxim is a law which includes a collection of arguments. An argument is perfected insofar as it approaches the maxim. When it has become a maxim, its perfection rejects the proofs of the metamorphosis.

Doubt is an homage rendered to hope. It is not a voluntary homage. Hope would not consent to be nothing but an homage.

Evil arises against good. It could not do less.

It is a proof of friendship to pay no attention to the growth of that of our friends.

Love is not happiness.

If we had no faults, we should not take so much pleasure in correcting ourselves, in praising in others what is lacking in ourselves.

Men who have resolved to hate their own kind are not aware that this must begin by self-hate.

Men who do not duel believe that those who duel to the death are brave.

How the degenerates of the novel squat in the shop windows! For a man losing himself, as some would for a five-franc piece, it sometimes seems that one might destroy a book.

Lamartine believed that the fall of an angel would become the Elevation of a Man. He was wrong to believe it.

To make evil serve the cause of good, I shall state that the intentions of the former are bad.

A banal truth contains more genius than the works of Dickens, Gustave Aymard, Victor Hugo, Landelle. With these latter, a child, surviving the universe, could not reconstruct the human soul. With the former, he could. I suppose he would not sooner or later discover the definition of sophistry.

The words expressing evil are destined to take on a useful significance. Ideas improve. The meaning of words participates.

Plagiarism is necessary. Progress implies it. It presses after an author's phrase, uses his expressions, erases a false idea, replaces it with the correct one.

In order to be well constructed, a maxim does not require to be corrected. It requires to be developed.

At the break of dawn, young girls come to gather roses. A wave of innocence flows through valleys and capitals, stirs the intelligence of the most enthusiastic poets, lets fall protection for cradles, crowns for youth, belief in immortality for the aged.

I have seen men weary moralists to discover their hearts and bring down upon them the blessing from on high. They emitted the most extensive meditations possible, making rejoice the Author of our happiness. They respected youth, age, all that breathes and does not breathe, paid homage to womankind, consecrated to chastity those parts which the body reserves the right to name. The firmament, whose beauty I admit, the earth, image of my heart, were invoked by me in order to discover a man who did not believe himself virtuous. The spectacle of this monster, had he materialized, would not have caused me to die of astonishment: death takes more than this. All this is beyond comment.

Reason and sentiment counsel and beseech one another. Who does not know that one of the two, in renouncing the other, deprives itself of all the help that has been granted to us for our guidance. Vauvenargues said: "a part of the help."

Whatever his phrase, mine is based upon personifications of the soul in sentiment, reason, the one which I chose at random, would be no better than the other if I had made them. One can not be rejected by me. Vauvenargues was able to accept the other.

When a predecessor uses in connection with good a word belonging to evil, it is dangerous that his phrase should exist beside the other. It is better to leave to the word the meaning of evil. To use in connection with good a word belonging to evil, one must have the right. He who uses for evil, words belonging to good does not possess it. He is not believed. No one would wish to wear Gérard de Nerval's tie.

The soul being one, sensibility, intelligence, will, reason, imagination, may be introduced into the discussion.

I have spent much time in the study of the abstract sciences. The few persons with whom I communicated were not of the stuff to disgust me with them. When I began to study man, I saw that these sciences belong to him alone, that I was less well off in penetrating them than others in their

ignorance of them. I forgave them for not engaging in the study! I did not expect to find many companions in my study of mankind. That belongs to him alone. I was strong. There are more who study him than who study geometry.

We lose our lives joyfully, providing we do not speak of it.

Passions dwindle with age. Love, which should not be classed among the passions, dwindle too. What it loses on the one hand it regains on the other. It is no longer severe with the object of its vows, doing itself justice: the expansion is accepted. The senses no longer have their spur to excite fleshly desires. Love of humanity begins. In the days when a man feels that he has become an altar decked with his virtues, makes an accounting of every sorrow, his soul in a fold of the heart wherein all seems to have birth, he feels something which flutters no more. I have named memory.

The writer, without separating one from the other, can indicate the law which regulates each of his poems.

Some philosophers are more intelligent than some poets. Spinoza, Malebranche, Aristotle, are not Hegesippus, Moreau, Malfilatre, Gilbert, André Chénier.

Faust, Manfred, Conrad are types. They are not reasoning types. They are types of agitators.

Descriptions are a meadow, three rhinoceri, and half a bier. They can be memory and prophecy. They are not the paragraph that I am about to finish.

The governor of the soul is not the governor of a soul. The governor of a soul is the governor of the soul when these two kinds of soul are sufficiently confused to affirm that a governor is a governess only in the imagination of a jesting fool.

Phenomenon passes. I seek laws.

There are men who are not types. Types are not men. One must not permit one's self to be dominated by the accidental.

Judgments on poetry have more value than poetry. They are the philosophy of poetry. Philosophy, thus understood, comprises poetry. Poetry cannot do without philosophy. Philosophy can do without poetry.

Racine is not capable of condensing his tragedies into precepts. A tragedy is not a precept. To a similar spirit, a precept is a more intelligent action than a tragedy.

Place a goose quill in the hands of a moralist who is a first-class writer. He will be superior to poets.

Love of justice is with most men the courage to suffer injustice.

War—hide yourself!

Sentiments express happiness, bring smiles. The analysis of sentiment

expresses happiness, all personality apart; and brings smiles. The former uplift the soul, independently of space and duration, up to the conception of humanity considered as itself, in their illustrious arms! The latter uplifts the soul, independently of duration and space, up to the conception of humanity considered in its highest expression, the will! The former is concerned with vice and virtue. The latter is concerned with virtue alone. Feelings know not the order of their going. The analysis of feeling teaches how to know this, increases the vigor of the feelings. With the former, all is uncertainty. They are expressions of happiness, of unhappiness, two extremes. With the latter, all is certainty. It is the expression of that happiness which results at a given moment from knowing restraint in the midst of good and evil passions. It uses its calm to dissolve the description of those passions in a principle which circulates throughout the pages: the non-existence of evil. Feelings weep when they must, as when they must not. Analysis of feeling does not weep. It possesses a latent sensibility which takes hold without warning, bears up beyond misery, teaches to dispense with a guide, provides a weapon for combat. Feelings, sign of weakness, are not feeling! The analysis of feeling, sign of strength, breeds the most magnificent feelings I know. The writer who permits himself to be taken in by feelings should not be considered in the same category as the writer who is taken in neither by feelings nor himself. Youth treats itself to sentimental lucubrations. Maturity begins to reason without difficulty. It was necessary only to feel, he thinks. He let his sensations drift: here he gives them a pilot. If I were to consider humanity as a woman, I should not maintain that its youth were in its decline, that its maturity were approaching. Its spirit changes for the better. The ideal of its poetry will change. Tragedies, poems, elegies, will no longer prevail. The coldness of the maxim will prevail! In Quinault's time they could have understood what I have just said. Thanks to a few sparse glimmerings during the last few years in magazines and folios, I can myself. The style which I undertake is as different from the style of the moralists, who merely confirm evil without suggesting a remedy, as this last is not different from melodramas, funeral orations, odes, and religious science. There is no feeling of struggle.

Elohim is made in the image of Man.

Many certain things are contradicted. Many false things are uncontradicted. Contradiction is the sign of falsity. Uncontradiction is the sign of truth.

A philosophy of science exists. It does not exist for poetry. I know of no moralist who is a first-rate poet. This is strange, someone will say.

It is a horrible thing to feel what one possesses slipping away. One becomes attached only with the idea of finding out if there is not something permanent.

Man is a subject empty of errors. Everything shows him the truth! Nothing abuses him. The two principles of truth, reason and sense, provided they do not lack sincerity, enlighten one another. The senses enlighten reason by real appearances. The same service they render it, they receive from it. Each takes its revenge. The phenomena of the soul pacify the senses, make impressions upon them which I will guarantee not to be vexatious. They do not lie. They do not make the mistake of vying with one another.

Poetry should be made by all. Not by one. Poor Hugo! Poor Racine! Poor Coppée! Poor Corneille! Poor Boileau! Poor Scarron! All ticks!

The sciences have two ends which meet. The first is the ignorance in which man finds himself at birth. The second is that attained by great minds. They have been through everything men may know, find they know all, and meet in that same ignorance whence they departed. It is a learned ignorance, which knows itself. Those among them who, having emerged from the first ignorance, have not been able to attain the other, have a slight touch of that sufficient science and pretend to wisdom. These will not trouble the world, will not judge everything worse than the others. The people, the experts, set the pace of a nation. The others, who respect it, are no less respected.

To know things, one must not know the details. As it is finished, our understandings are sound.

Love is not confused with poetry.

Woman is at my feet!

To describe the heavens, the sky, it is not necessary to carry earthly materials up there. We must leave the earth and its materials there where they are in order to embellish life with its ideal. To speak familiarly to Elohim is an unsuitable buffoonery. The best way to acknowledge him is not to trumpet in his ears that he is powerful, that he created the world, that we are maggots compared to his greatness. He knows this better than we. Men may refrain from informing him of it. The best way to acknowledge him is to console humanity, to attribute all to it, to take it by the hand, to treat it as a brother. This is truer.

To study order, do not study disorder. Scientific experiments, like tragedies, stanzas to my sister, the gibberish of the afflicted, have no place here below.

Not all laws are good to state.

To study evil in order to produce good is not to study good itself. A good phenomenon being given, I shall seek out its cause.

Hitherto, unhappiness has been described in order to inspire terror and pity. I shall describe happiness in order to inspire their contraries.

A logic exists for poetry. It is not the same as that for philosophy. Philos-

ophers are not as much as poets. Poets have the right to consider themselves above philosophers.

I do not need to occupy myself with what I shall do later. I must do as I do. I need not discover what things I shall discover later. In the new science, each thing comes in its turn, such is its excellence.

There is the stuff of poets in moralists and philosophers. The poet comprises the thinker. Each caste suspects the other, develops its qualities to the detriment of those which approach it from the other caste. The jealousy of the former will not admit that poets are stronger than they. The pride of the latter declares itself incompetent to render justice to more sensitive brains. Whatever be the intelligence of a man, the procedure of thought must be the same for all.

The existence of ticks having been established, let no one be surprised to see the same words recurring more often than in their turn: in Lamartine, the tears that fall from the nostrils of his horse, the color of his mother's hair. In Hugo, shadow and disorder form part of the building.

The science undertaken by me is a distinct science of poetry. I do not sing this latter. I strive to discover its origin. By the rudder that steers all poetic thought, billiard-teachers will distinguish the development of sentimental theses.

The theorem is a mocker by nature. It is not indecent. The theorem does not ask to serve as application. The application made of it degrades the theorem, makes it indecent. Call application the struggle against matter, against the ravages of the mind.

To strive against evil is to do it too much honor. If I permit men to scorn it, let them not fail to add that this is all I can do for them.

Man is certain to make no mistakes.

We are not content with the life we have within us. We wish to live in the ideas of others, in an imaginary life. We force ourselves to appear as we are. We labor to preserve this imaginary being, which is none other than the real. If we have generosity, fidelity, we are eager not to make it known, in order to attach their virtues to this being. We do not detach them from ourselves to bring about this coupling. We are valiant in order to acquire the reputation of not being poltroons. Sign of the capacity of our being, to be dissatisfied with the one without the other, to renounce neither to one nor the other. The man who did live to preserve his virtue would be infamous.

Despite the aspect of our greatness, which seizes us by the throat, we have an instinct which corrects us, which we cannot repress, which elevates us!

Nature has perfections to show that she is the image of Elohim, and defects to show that she is not less than the image.

It is good to obey laws. The people understand what makes them just. One does not abandon them. When their justice is made to depend upon something else, it is easy to make it doubtful. The people are not subjects for revolt.

Those who are in disorder tell those who are in order that it is they who depart from nature. They believe they themselves follow it. There must be an established point for judgment. Where shall we not find that point in morality?

Nothing is less strange than the contradictions to be found in man. He is created to know truth. He seeks it. When he tries to seize it he is dazzled, confused in such a manner that there is no arguing with him the possession of it. Some seek to deprive Man of the knowledge of truth; others seek to assure him of it. Each is activated by motives so different that they destroy man's perplexity. There is no other light than that to be found in his nature.

We are born just. Each turns to himself. This is the reverse of order. One should incline toward generality. The inclination toward self is the end of all disorder, in war, in economics.

Men, having been able to recover from death, from misery, from ignorance, have decided, in order to gain happiness, not to think about them. This is all they have been able to discover as consolation for so few evils. A super-rich consolation! It does not go as far as curing evil. It conceals it for a little while. By concealing evil, it makes us think about remedying it. By a legitimate reversal of man's nature, we do not find boredom, which is the most pronounced of his evils, to be his greatest good. More than anything else it can contribute most to the discovery of his rehabilitation. This is all. Amusement, which he looks upon as his greatest benefit, is the very least of his evils. More than anything else, he employs it in the search for a remedy for his ills. Each is a counter-proof of misery, of man's corruption, with the exception of his greatness. Man is bored, he seeks a multitude of occupations. He has an idea of happiness won; which, finding itself within him, he seeks in exterior things. He is happy. Unhappiness is neither within us nor within other creatures. It is within Elohim.

Nature makes us happy in all states; our desires depict for us a state of unhappiness. It connects with the state in which we are the sorrows of the state in which we are not. When we shall arrive at these sorrows, we shall not be unhappy because of this; we shall have other desires in keeping with a new state.

The strength of reason appears better in those who understand it than in those who do not.

We are so little presumptuous that we would desire to be known upon

the earth even by those who will come when we are no more. We are so little vain that the respect of five persons, or say six, amuses us, honors us.

Few things console us. Many things afflict us.

Modesty is so natural in man's heart that a workingman is careful not to brag, wants to have his admirers. Philosophers want them. Poets above all! Those who write in favor of glory wish to have the glory of having written well. Those who read it wish to have the glory of having read it. Those who will read it will boast similarly.

Man's inventions increase. The goodness, the malice, of people in general does not remain the same.

The spirit of the greatest man is not so dependent that it should be troubled by the least murmur of the uproar that goes on about it. The silence of a cannon is not necessary to impede his thoughts. The sounds of a weather-cock, of a pulley, are not necessary. The fly does not reason well at present. A man buzzes at its ears. This is sufficient to make it incapable of good counsel. If I desire that it should discover truth, I should chase away that animal which holds its reason in check—disturbs that intelligence which governs kingdoms.

The object of these people who play tennis with such concentration of mind, such bodily activity, is to boast before their friends that they have played better than someone else. Some sweat in their studies to show the erudite that they have resolved an algebraic equation hitherto unsolvable. Others expose themselves to dangers in order to brag of a place that they would have taken less spiritually, to my mind. These latter destroy themselves to observe these things. It is not in order to become less wise through them. It is above all to show that they understand the solidity of them. These are the least stupid of the bunch; and they are conscious of it. One may think of others who would not be, lacking this consciousness.

The example of the chastity of Alexander has not created more continent peoples than that of his drunkenness has created temperate people. One is not ashamed of having been less virtuous than he. One believes one's self to be not quite among the virtues of the common man when one sees one's self among the virtues of these great men. We hold on to them by the end where they hang on to the people. However high they may be, they are united somewhere with the rest of mankind. They are not suspended in the air, separated from our society. If they are greater than we, it is because their feet are as high as ours. They are all at the same level, rest upon the same earth. By this extremity they are as high as we, as children, a little more than the beasts.

The best way to persuade is not to persuade.

Despair is the least of our errors.

When a thought offers itself to us like a truth running through the streets, when we take the trouble to develop it, we find that it is a discovery.

One may be just, if one is not human.

The storms of youth precede brilliant days.

The unconsciousness, dishonor, lewdness, hatred, contempt of men is worth money. Liberality multiplies the advantage of riches.

Those who are honest in their pleasures are sincere in their business. It is a sign of a mild nature when pleasure makes us human.

The moderation of great men limits only their virtues.

It is offensive to humans to offer them praises which enlarge only the bounds of their merits. Many persons are modest enough to suffer appreciation without pain.

Everything should be expected, nothing feared, from time and men.

If merit and glory do not make men unhappy, that which is called unhappiness is not worthy of their sorrow. A soul deigns to accept fortune and repose if the vigor of its feelings and the mainspring of its genius are to be superimposed.

We value great plans when we feel ourselves capable of great successes.

Reserve is the apprenticeship of the mind.

We say sound things when we are not trying to say extraordinary ones.

Nothing true is false; nothing false is true. All is the contrary of dream, of falsehood.

We must not believe that what Nature has made friendly should be vicious. There has not been a century or a people that has not established imaginary virtues and vices.

We can judge of the beauty of life only by that of death.

A dramatist can give to the word *passion* a meaning of usefulness. He is no longer a dramatist. A moralist gives any word a meaning of usefulness. He is still a moralist!

Whoever considers the life of a man finds therein the history of the species. Nothing has been able to make it evil.

Must I write in verse to separate myself from the rest of mankind? Charity forbid!

The pretext of those who work for the happiness of others is that they desire their own good.

Generosity rejoices in the happiness of others as if she herself were responsible for it.

Order prevails in the human species. Reason and virtue are not the strongest.

There are few ingrates among princes. They give all they can.

We can love with all our hearts those in whom we recognize great faults.

It would be impertinent to believe that imperfection alone has the right to please us. Our weaknesses draw us together as much as that which is not virtue may do.

If our friends do us a service, we think that as friends they owe it to us. We do not at all think that they owe us their enmity.

He who is born to command will command as far as the throne.

When duties have exhausted us, we think we have exhausted duties. We say that all may fill the heart of man.

Everything lives by action. Thence, communication among beings, harmony of the universe. This law, so fertile in Nature, we find to be a vice in man. He is forced to obey it. Since he cannot exist in repose, we conclude that he is in his place.

We know what the sun and the heavens are. We know the secret of their movements. In the hand of Elohim, blind instrument, unfeeling spring, the world attracts our worship. The revolutions of empires, the aspect of the times, the nations, the conquerors of science, all that springs from a random atom, lasts only for a day, destroys the spectacle of the universe throughout the ages.

There is more truth than error, more good qualities than bad ones, more pleasures than pains. We like to control character. We raise ourselves above our kind. We enrich ourselves with the consideration with which we load it. We do not believe we can separate our interest from that of humanity, that we can disparage the species without compromising ourselves. This ridiculous vanity has filled books with hymns in favor of Nature. With those who think, mankind is in disgrace. He is for whomever charges him with the least vice. When was he not on the verge of uplifting himself, of reinstating himself in virtue?

Nothing is said. It is too soon since more than seven thousand years that there have been men. As for customs, as for all the rest, the least good is set on high. We have the advantage of working after the ancients, the wise men among the moderns.

We are susceptible of friendship, justice, compassion, reason. O, my friends? What, then, is this absence of virtue?

Inasmuch as my friends do not die, I shall not speak of death.

To witness our relapses, to observe that our sorrows have been able to correct our faults, fills us with consternation.

We can judge the beauty of death only by the beauty of life.

The three final points make me shrug my shoulders in pity. Is that necessary in order to prove that one is an intelligent man, in other words an imbecile? As if light were not as good as shadow, speaking of points!

THE IMAGE IN THE CLOUD AND IN THE FIRE

LT. HARVEY VIVIAN, R.A.F.

That old magician, inhabitant of the head, indweller in the brain,
Watching, through the iris curtained windows of the eyes, events
And things which mortals see, and, seeing, claim to know,
Tallies, like a switchboard operator, communication,
Perceiving all—the thing seen, the incident, and the train
Of sequence—from the place of happening to the eye; thence, realisation
Imported to the rational mind, and the image brain will show
The inflammable heart, whose burning heat, if the contents
For report be too awful, finally, may scar and utterly strain
That self from God, the very construction of inmost man,
The soul of him.

This instant engagement the resident knows: by cunning, can
Subtly modify impression; interrupt their process,
Severing realisation fully; forestall, by metamorphosis
Of the seen event into something other; confer forgetfulness,
Or allow for transmission only so much of dreadfulness,
Nicely adjusted to the heart's capacity, that it shall not burst
On the impact of feeling; shall sense the terrible, but know not the worst.

* * *

Thus, humans wanton with terrible toys,
Charged with concussive death,
Devised in man's full knowledge to climb
The skies, fly swift, to poise
And plunge, splitting the tortured air
Whose agonised breath
Is ripped from its body in the time
Of a scream: a rising, hellish noise
Which stops. And men whisper, "Where?"

The eyes know. First, they see it; compute the place,
Witness result, mark where havoc has gone to the covert
Of habitation; summon attendant ears be alert
To interpret the mirrored sign—imminently, further to be sent
That the sign may have co-ordination, by reasonable assessment,
With those held store in memory. And further . . . But, for this case
Moves magic, prepared;

VIVIAN

passes those eyes with distracting skill

In the instant of detonation. Dust, smoke, blood he will
Have of the victims' flesh and stone for properties to display
His touch. And presently begins, with conjurous guile, to fill
The silly, gaping head. Of spurting destruction, straightway
He grows, to darken at decency's command the day,
Tall, funeral plumes, powder-cloud-expanding, gray,
Ascending weightless.

(So, in the prison-pond of a glass do float, and thrill
The wide-eyed child, bright paper atoms of the Japanese,
Brought by aqueous change to growth, as flowers and trees,
Frozen in brightness.)

No such tiny gay petals for the decoration of disaster.
Catastrophe challenges all his skill to match its grandeur.
And he, aware of the modern way, its demand of the gesture
Of scale to obliterate shame, is solicitous his art shall please.
Not niggard of grief's expression, will spare nothing, materialize
Tribute plumes admitting no doubt of sorrow's size,
Huge with the overstatement of advertisement, spell-binding the eyes—
(Recalling, perhaps, pathetically, the lavishness of a gangster's graces,
For whose dead is woven only the most imposing wreath; which he places,
Hallowed by decorum, himself—feeling (who knows?), he purifies
Bloody hands by suitable sedateness; that he wipes the faces
Of his broken men clean.)

So now mount these.

With the monstrous, slow ease of slow-motion film unfold,
That discovers the secrets of natural growth, mimed splendour,
In a fronded tower of obscene ostentation, and (grave as the donor,
As he is moved by the wind of convention; whose pain is told
In a grave nodding) incline their mourning crests in the breeze.
Ruin's masquerade, through lightning sleight-of-mind,
Is dressed in the instant. Film-shutter-swift is clicked the blind
On reality glimpsed; and the vision's capture given, but refined
To sensibility's pleasure.

You may dislike his tricks. Angered, you can revile;
Hate yourself, the dupe of his ways; scorn, or smile
At my forgiving; bitterly, call me to persecute guile;
Cry, frenzied, measure

**At least, for pity's sake, the truth of toppling walls
Crumbling, acknowledge the torn bodies, victims' calls**

VIVIAN

From the flames—yea, humanity's despair, for a nation falls!—
I might, and I knew how.

And were not the very climax of destruction noiseless. If there,
By a pass of thin, soft-merciful hands, the air
Miraged not a crescent fringe of new-growing hair
Above a darling brow.

* * *

The moon is sick tonight, and the cold sweat,
Dried by an inward consumption upon his face,
Stands in the gleamless texture of prescient fear.
His house, in the enemy night, is in an old man's room,
Where an old man dies in the unfresh air
Of death. And, like one who tightens with clawing hands
The hold on the high-drawn clothes at his chin, spending
His last strength against surrender, so the moon,
His face crossed by clouds like broken hopes,
In cold fever-spasms clings to their ragged hems.

The room is overdressed and overcrowded
By heavy shapes, extending undefined
Except by weight of obscurity. Only light,
Sickly light, where the face swims fainting
In its pool.

This is the enemy night
Whither are borne six lives interwoven,
Knotted by a duty to destroy, and the tension
Of seeking the aim for destruction, prising a rupture
Of the alien gloom that suffocates sight.

Horrible to man is the unboundaried, and the place
Without definition he shuns. Hence, will creep out
Tentative fingers to establish the comfort of confines,
Which, here, touch only the shell, incredibly thin,
Of an aircraft. And, beyond, the thickening shadow.
The solace of factual fabric and metal established,
Incredulous still, yet he has some reassurance;
Doubles surety, needing companionate sounds,
By telephoned words to the others, and hearing their voices.

VIVIAN

Which spill in the veins that little warmth the blood has craved,
To combat the friendless chill of altitude, its isolation
Sensed in the bones, while hungry reason's confirmation
Hangs all on a tilting needle of tremulous light, self-engraved
On a cockpit dial.

The outside, empty of kindred creation,
Blair as the stagnant waters closed in thick glass walls
Of an aquarium-pool, is drained of direction. In the yawning halls
Branching this formless gallery of space, near-desperate reason
Compels the eyes recover, urgently, the traitor sense.

Suddenly, there is no cloud. Into the narrowing, funnel shaft,
Down to the shrinking limit, the avid sight is poured—
Perhaps the geometrical image, instantaneously restored,
Of perpendicular dropped to the plane of earth, refound,
Reconstructs relationship, defines, remarries action
To purpose.

While the cold flowers of the rocking flarelights drift
Of a sudden down to the place.

Precisely, in these nights,
Is ruin spread; not with heat of temper. Only, from the ground,
Thrusting light-fingers, testing, like a curious hand with a gift.

Now is terror restrained, by the fractional plunge of a lever
Withheld. And a gloved hand moves, under eyes' dictation,
Waiting a word which, it only, divides, until sounded,
The place and its living men from extinction, compounded
Of their elemental dusts. Moves again the hand, nearer:
Rests lightly, learning the ebony shape in anticipation:
Strikes, on a breath intaken, as the awful syllable falls:
"Now!" irrevocably spoken.

What pity, what merciful loving-kindness,
In that very instant of inbreathing,
Armours against conception
In the womb of feeling?

Or, lest the heart by it be broken
To a dust as pitiable as theirs,
Has veiled understanding with inward blindness?
And engendered anew to sight

VIVIAN

The same hand gently stealing,
Gently (long ago?) to follow,
(While yet it lay in the grace of love,)
In infinite sweetness,

The tender line of curls above
A cheek, of whose hollow
Secret places, little hairs astray,
The inmost fragrance did betray?

August, 1944

Prisoner of War Camp—Stalagluft 3

CINEMA AS AN ART FORM

MAYA DEREN

*To my father, who, when I was a child, once
spoke to me of life as an unstable equilibrium.*

EVEN THE MOST cursory observation of film production reveals that the entire field is dominated by two main approaches: the fiction-entertainment film, promoted internationally by commercial interests; and the documentary-educational film, promoted by individuals and organizations interested in social reform, visual education and cultural dissemination. What is conspicuously lacking is the development of cinema as an art form—concerned with the type of perception which characterizes all other art forms such as poetry, painting, etc., and devoted to the development of a formal idiom as independent of other art forms as they are of each other.

The seriousness of this gap in our cultural development is in no way lessened by the utilitarian validity of the camera as an instrument for recording and infinitely reproducing imaginative or factual material which would otherwise be accessible to a very limited audience. Nor should this lack of cinematic form be obscured by the growing body of sometimes sensational film techniques which are developed and exploited in the interest of a more effective rendition of the subject matter.

However, the most serious aspect of the entire situation is the passive acceptance and casual neglect of this state of the cinema by those whose active, compulsive interest and devotion is responsible for the varying but constant vitality of other art forms. This passivity on the part of those who should, presumably, be the most actively interested, is the more serious since it derives not from an innocent ignorance of cinematic possibilities, but constitutes a reaction to the apparent failure of the film avant-garde of France and other countries. It is true that, out of the flurry of cinematic experiments which marked the twenties and early thirties, only a few emerge as art expressions of lasting, intrinsic value. The great majority of them are of interest as period-pieces, symptomatic of a given stage of film history. But it is false to deduce from this, and from the dwindling away of the movement as a whole, that there is something in the very nature of film-making which precludes the possibility of its development as an art form.

It is true that an analysis of the failure of the first film-avant-garde would seem to indicate certain formidable and paralyzing conclusions. First among these is that since the production of films is necessarily expensive (much more so than the production of a poem or a painting) they must

appeal to large audiences in order to meet their expenses—those very audiences who daily indicate their approval of the present Hollywood product. Second, but no less important, it seems that the machinery, the enormous personnel of assistant directors, cameramen, lighting men, actors and producers, represents a kind of collective monster who, standing between the artist and the realization of his vision, is bound to mangle any delicate or sensitive impulse. This is an obstacle which the poet, in his direct control over words, and the painter in his direct relationship to the canvas, does not confront. Finally, the use of the camera as a utilitarian instrument for recording remains such a fertile field of activity that a completely creative use of it will remain, both to potential producers and to potential audience, a rather superfluous excursion.

The basic fallacy in this entire line of argument consists in the fact that those who advance it have (unconsciously, to be sure) been the victims of elaborate propaganda. The cosmic production figures which Hollywood takes great care in making public, represent a typically grandiose conceit. In Hollywood let no one be guilty of achieving something with less expense, less fanfare and less trouble than can possibly be employed, for in that glittering system of values, economy of any kind constitutes a debase-ment. In Hollywood logic, this is sound enough, for if a film is dependent upon the recording of reality, or rather its papier-mâché stand-in, then all possible lavish care must be taken in the construction of that reality—from the star (with her background of publicity, make-up men, etc.) to the *real* mink-lined dress in which she will dance. If, however, a film were itself, through camera and cutting, to create a reality, the star salaries, the set-builders, the costumers, the full orchestrations, the million-dollar gag writers, the fantastic hierarchy of executives and overhead would disappear. A film can be treated on 16mm for varying sums of from \$500 to \$10,000. Once this is achieved, the problem of the mass audience vanishes, for the audience which supports (in modest style, to be sure) the other art forms, is also sufficient to return such relatively modest production costs.

Moreover, the monstrous division of labor which characterizes the industry and makes of a film an assembly line product—passing from idea-man to writer to screen-play writer to shooting-script writer to director to actor (while the electricians and the camera-men are engaged in another section of it), and so on until the dismal end—this is not only unnecessary, but completely destructive to the idiom. Intrinsic integrity is possible only when the individual who conceives the work remains its prime mover until the end, with purely technical assistance where necessary.

It is true that even with these simplifications, the magnitude of the purely practical problems of film-making is rather unique; but it is also true that, whatever they are, these remain problems of *execution* only, and should

not be confused with the creative and esthetic problems of conception. Nor do they excuse films from incorporating those values which we expect to be present in other works of art.

* * *

When we agree that a work of art is, first of all, creative, we actually mean that it *creates* a reality and *itself constitutes* an experience. The anti-thesis of such a creative work is the merely communicative expression whose purpose it is to register, through *description* an existent reality or an experience. When the created reality differs from the existent reality only by subtle variations, or when great skill and accuracy are brought to the description of an extra-ordinary reality, the distinction between the products seems almost obliterated. It resolves itself into a question of form, which I shall discuss later.

What is important, however, is that the descriptive expression approaches the creative expression when (as in all creative expression) it is devoted to the *experience* of reality rather than *reality* itself. It is revealing that the best use of cinematic form (camera, editing, etc.) appears in those commercial films which seek to describe an abnormal state of mind and its abnormal perception of reality.

The consistent popularity of horror films, on one level, and of 'psychological' films, on another, testifies to the seductive quality of experiential reality as subject matter for cinema, since cinema is uniquely capable of presenting the unbelievable with a show-it-to-me convincingness. It is significant that Hollywood conceives intense experience to be the particular attribute of abnormality either in the environment (horror films) or in the individual 'psyche' (psychological films). The implication is, that non-objectively-real, imaginative force (and here the subconscious appears as a manifestation of the supernatural) may be interesting, but that they are essentially malevolent. In the end, the imagination as a way of life does not pay. The imaginative individual is represented either as a psychic criminal who will receive his just deserts at the hands of a society determined to re-establish the same way of life; or as a psychically diseased organism which should be restored to a normal condition.

Thus, the imaginative experience which is for the artist a *desired normality*, is for the motion picture industry a dangerous, *psychic illegality*. As producer of a "mass art," the industry assumes a social responsibility. Accepting a pre-disposition towards evil in even the most innocent, it provides them with catharsis through the vicarious experience of its seductive aspects. At the same time it threatens them with dire consequences should they replace the vicarious experience with the direct.

In devoting at least some attention to the powerful potentialities of the

imaginative experience, the industry has been more acute than that considerable body of theoreticians who hold that a "mass art" should concern itself with the *common* problems of a *common*, objective reality in terms of a *common* denominator of perception. Actually the distilled, experiential emotion of an incident is more universal and timeless than the incident itself. Fear, for example, as a subjective experience is as universal as the incidents of reality in which it arises are singular. Yet these critics claim that a work of the imagination is an esoteric object, accessible to the comprehension only of a select few.

It is therefore relevant to underline here the fact that the appreciation of a work based on experiential, or inner, realities consists not in a laborious analysis based on the logic of a reality which a 'prepared' spectator brings to the work. It consists, rather, in an abandonment of all previously conceived realities. It depends upon an attitude of *innocent receptivity which permits the perception and the experience of the new reality*. Once this reality has been perceived and experienced, its logic may be deduced if one wishes. Such a deduction is not necessary to the perception and can only follow it as a secondary activity, much as an analysis of love, for example, can only follow upon the experience but can never induce it.

The audience for art is limited not by ignorance nor by an inability to analyze, but by a lack of innocent receptivity. The defensism which is responsible for this reluctance to surrender one's own reality, at least temporarily, in order to experience another, is symptomatic of a social condition for which the artist is not responsible. It is based on the fact that if one concedes validity to contemporary realities other than one's own, the self-righteous convictions—those "absolute" truths—upon which social organization is based, are undermined. To this the average social being is instinctively and traditionally opposed.

At the opposite pole to the objective realists stand the psycho-socio-analysts, a movement which has gained impetus from the self-conscious alignment of the surrealists with Freudian and political theory. Here, any expression is regarded as a compulsive confessional, and a comprehension of it is considered dependent upon an analysis of the relationship of the images to the psyche of their source.

The most interesting results of this method occur in the work of a few highly intelligent, sophisticated film-critics who regard commercial films as the somnambulistic confessionals of modern society. They proceed on the assumption that the significant meanings are not so much incorporated in the *intended statement* (which is the case with a work of art) but are *concealed in its decorative periphery and in the relationships between the statement and its source*.

The psycho-analytical approach is also rewarding in a comprehension

of fantasy. In Hollywood films the significant meanings are derived from an analysis of the morally-determined (both conscious and un-conscious) censorships which give form, through limitation, to the work. In fantasy such censorships are presumably absent and the organizational integrity (hence the significant meaning) of these completely compulsive projections of psychic imagery, resides forever in its particular psychic source.

But if the psycho-analytical approach is brought to a truly creative, imaginative work of art, it yields a distorted interpretation. For such a work, although it is also based (like fantasy) on the personal psyche, is a process in which the raw materials of fantasy are assorted, selected and integrated in terms of a dominant idea or emotion. The energies of the artist are devoted to so mating his psychic images with the art instrument that the resultant product is imbued with a vitality independent of its source. Thus it is conceived, shaped, fed and formed towards the day of its emergence from the parent body as an independent, organized form. As such, its *reality and meaning are contained within itself and in the dynamics of the inter-relationships of its component parts*; even though the nature of that reality and dynamic is determined by the conceptual sources from which it derives.

* * *

Art is distinguished from other human activities and expression by this organic function of *form* in the projection of imaginative experience into reality. This function of *form* is characterized by two essential qualities: first, that it incorporates in itself the philosophy and emotions which relate to the experience which is being projected; and second, that it derives from the instrument by which that projection is accomplished.

While the relationship of form to content has been given much consideration and recognition, the role of the instrument, in the case of cinema particularly, deserves special attention. The relationship of the instrument to the form—the *oneness* between them—is clear enough in painting, where the form of painting is one with paint and brush; or in poetry, where the form is one with words. Here the conception of technique is expressed in the somewhat idealized notion that the brush of a painter should act, almost, as an organic extension of the hand. But to think of the mechanism of the cinema as an extension of human faculties, is to deny the advantage of the machine. The entire excitement of working with a machine as a creative instrument rests, on the contrary, in the recognition of its capacity for a *qualitatively different* dimension of projection. That is why, in cinema, the instrument (and by this I mean both the camera and the cutting of the film) becomes not a passive, adjustable conveyor of formal decisions, but an active, contributing formative factor.

The mechanical similarity between the lens and the eye is largely responsible for the use of the camera as a recording, rather than as a creative, instrument, for the function of the eye is to register. However, it is in the *mind behind the eye* that the registered material achieves meaning and impact. In cinema this extension has been ignored. The meaning of the incident or experience is here made an *attribute of the reality in front of the lens* rather than a creative act on the part of the mechanism (including the human being) behind the lens.

In keeping with this theory of the camera as a registering eye, there is a substantial school of thought which holds that the documentary film, by exploiting the capacity of the camera to record reality, constitutes *the* cinematic art form. Certain sequences from "Fighting Lady" (a war documentary), in which enemy planes are engaged in combat and are strafed at close quarters, are advanced as an example of great cinematic achievement. Actually, these sequences were achieved as follows: the camera shutter was connected to the gun in such a way that it was automatically released when the gun was fired. These sequences are, then, the result of the automatic functioning of a brainless mechanism which operated in synchronization with another mechanism, a gun, which was operated because of the desire to kill. This, as a motivation, has obviously little in common with the motivation of art.

When the camera is used to register (for infinite reproduction) either theater, or a picturization of fiction, or a so-called 'objective' reality, there is no more *oneness* between form and instrument than there is between the poem and the typewriter. But whereas the typewriter can hardly be considered capable of creative action, the camera is, potentially, a highly creative instrument.

We are, however, in a period in which the reporter, the international correspondent, stands as a Man of Letters in the public mind. All who have read fine poetry could not confuse even the finest reportorial account with a poem. Documentaries are the visual counterparts of reportorial dispatches, and bear the same relationship to cinema art as the dispatches do to poetry. If, particularly in film, the flowering of the documentary has almost obscured all else save the 'entertainment' film, it is because the events and accidents of reality are, today, more monstrous, more shocking, than the human imagination is capable of inventing. The war gives rise to incidents which are not only beyond the inventive power of the human imagination, but also beyond its capacity, almost, to believe. In this period, where we are concerned with the unbelievable-ness of incidents, we require a reportage and a proof of their reality. But the great art expressions will come later, as they always have; and they will be dedicated, again, to the *agony* and the *experience* rather than the *incident*.

What has been most responsible for the lack of development of the cinematic idiom is the emphatic literacy of our age. So accustomed are we to thinking in terms of the continuity-logic of the literary narrative that the narrative pattern has come to completely dominate cinematic expression in spite of the fact that it is, basically, a visual form. We overlook the fact that painting, for instance, is organized in visual logics, or that music is organized in tonal-rhythmic logics, that there are visual and auditory experiences which have nothing to do with the descriptive narrative.

Once we arrive at an independent cinematic idiom, the present subservience of cinema to the literary story will appear unbelievably primitive. It will seem comparable to those early days when the air-planes flew above and along the highway and railroad routes. The fact that they moved by air—a dustless, faster, pleasanter method than railroad or automobile—does not negate the fact that they travelled *by earth*, not *by air*. It is also true that, before one could travel really by air, many instruments, techniques, etc., had to be developed. But the fact is that if these efforts to discover the element air—as contrasted to the elements earth and water,—had not been made, airplane travel would have remained a merely minor, quantitative improvement over earthly locomotion and would never have so qualitatively affected our concepts of time and space and our relationship to them.

There are also those who, riding in an airplane, turn their attention to recognizing earth landmarks and who complain for the lack of bird songs and flower perfumes. In their fixation upon the familiar and the recognizable, they fail to enlarge their experience. As long as we seek for literature in cinema, whose peculiar beauty and creative potentialities have hardly been touched, it will be denied development.

The fact that an individual may find walking in the country more satisfying than swimming in the ocean or flying through the air is a question of his own personal preference; but it is only in terms of personal disposition that preferential comparisons can be made between experiences which differ qualitatively. Moreover, ideally, such personal preferences and predispositions should not be permitted to minimize the value of an experience which differs, qualitatively, from that towards which the individual may be pre-disposed.

I hope therefore that it is clear that, in my repeated references to literature and other art forms, in my insistence upon the independence of cinema from them, and in my suggestion that, as an art form, cinema seems especially appropriate to some of the central problems of our time, I am not implying a comparative value judgment. On the contrary, by insisting upon its independence from other art forms, I strike at the very heart of the growing tendency to think of motion pictures as a somehow superior method of communicating literary or theatrical experience. (Dance, for

example, which, of all art forms would seem to profit most by cinematic treatment, actually suffers miserably. The more successful it is as a theatrical expression, conceived in terms of a stable, stage-front audience, the more its carefully wrought choreographic patterns suffer from the restiveness of a camera which bobs about in the wings, on-stage for a close-up, etc. . . . There *is* a potential filmic dance form, in which the choreography and movements would be designed, precisely, for the mobility and other attributes of the camera, but this, too, requires an independence from theatrical dance conceptions.)

The development of cinematic form has suffered not only because the camera has been used almost exclusively to pictorialize literature and to document reality, but also because it came into a world in which other art forms had already been firmly established for centuries. Painters, for instance, inspired by the possibilities of this new medium, brought to it the traditions of the idiom with which they were first pre-occupied. Consequently, in many abstract films, the film frame has been used as an animated canvas. But these are developments in painting rather than in film. In most cases the creative energy of the artists who came from other fields was dedicated first of all, to the arrangement of objects in front of the lens rather than the manner of manipulating the mechanism behind the lens.

Nor does the direction of cinematic form consist in a wide-eyed game with the camera as if it were a new toy in the hands of a curious, clever child. It does not consist in making things appear or disappear, go fast or slow, backwards or forwards, just because a camera can do that. This results merely in a sensationalist, virtuoso exercise of skills and techniques. Cinematic form is more profound than that. It is a concept of the integration of techniques, a search for the meaning of a skill.

* * *

Cinema—and by this is understood the entire body of technique including camera, lighting, acting, editing, etc.—is a time-space art with a unique capacity for creating new temporal-spatial relationships and projecting them with an incontrovertible impact of reality—the reality of show-it-to-me. It emerges in a period marked, simultaneously, by the development of radio in communication, the airplane and the rocket-ship in transportation, and the theory of relativity in physics. To ignore the implications of this simultaneity, or to consider it a historical coincidence, would constitute not only a failure to understand the basic nature of these contributions to our civilization; it would also make us guilty of an even more profound failure, that of recognizing the relationships of human ideology to material development.

The nazi concept of racial integrity, for instance, belongs to that period in which a mountain between two valleys served to localize the tribes of each. In such primitive civilization, subject to all sorts of natural disasters, rigidly localized by geographical and material restrictions, a philosophy which placed the unity of the tribe above all else was appropriate. The isolation gave reason to an absolutistic philosophy of time and space. The need for tribal unity gave reason to the concept of absolute authority in the state, religion and mores in general.

Today the aeroplane and the radio have created, in fact, a relativistic reality of time and space. They have introduced into our immediate reality a dimension which functions not as an added spatial location but which, being both temporal and spatial, relates to all the other dimensions with which we are familiar. There is not an object which does not require re-location in terms of this new frame of reference, and not least among these is the individual.

Imperceptibly, almost, this sense of relativism has begun to influence our thinking. In spatial terms, for example, the absolutistic differentiation between *here* and *there* loses meaning as *here* and *there*, being so mutually accessible, become, in effect, almost identical. In terms of time, the chronology of the past, present and future has also increasingly lost its meaning as we have come to understand the continuity of the past with the future—and, prodded on by the actual acceleration of historical processes, to deal with the present moment as an extension of the past into the future rather than as an independent temporal period.

Moreover, because of the quality of this new referential frame, validity is no longer a function of the object itself. It has become, instead, a function of the position of that object in the constellation of which it is part. The concept of absolute intrinsic values, whose stability must be maintained, gives way to the concept of relationships which ceaselessly are created, dissolved and recreated and which bestow value upon the part according to its functional relation to the whole. We face the problem of discovering the dynamics of maintaining an *unstable equilibrium*.

The individual, deprived of the absolutisms which moulded the moral pattern of his life, is faced with a critical, desperate need to discover in himself an integrity at once constant enough to constitute an identity and adjustable enough to relate to an apparently anarchic universe whose gravities, revolutions and constellations operate according to a logic which he has yet to discover. The solution does not rest in the infinite adjustments and revisions of a Ptolmeaic system of description.

Cinema, with its capacity to manipulate time and space seems eminently appropriate as an art form in which such problems can find expression. By manipulation of time and space I do not mean such established filmic

techniques as flash-backs, condensation of time, parallel actions etc. . . these affect not the action itself, but the method of revealing it. In a flash-back there is no implication that the usual chronological integrity of the action itself is in any way affected by the process, however disrupted, of memory. The turning of spring into winter by one swift dissolve is a condensation of the presentation of the seasons, but does not affect the implication of customary seasonal rhythms. Parallel actions—as in a sequence when we see, alternately, the hero who rushes to the rescue and the heroine, whose situation becomes increasingly critical—is an omnipresence on the part of the camera as a witness of action, not as a creator of it.

When dislocations of reality occur in commercial films, they are inevitably presented as a quality, not of the reality itself, but of a distorted view of it. But the dislocations of modern life—are, precisely, dislocations of reality itself. And it is conceivable that an individual should be incapable of a distortion of vision which, designed to compliment and “correct” these dislocations of reality, results in an apparent ‘adjustment.’

The external universe which we once considered, at least in our immediate locality, as the passive recipient of the manifestations of the individual will—the stage upon which the conflict of human wills was dramatically enacted—has been revealed as an active creative force. And again, cinema, with its capacity for animating the ostensibly inanimate, for re-relating the ostensibly immobile, is especially equipped to deal with such experiences.

The potentialities of cinema are rich and unexplored. It can relate two unrelated geographies by the continuous unity of an un-interrupted movement begun in one and concluded in the other. It can project as simultaneities, chronologically distant events. Slow motion, and the agony of its analysis, reveals in the most casual incident, a cosmic constellation. Yet no verbal description can convey the sense of a medium which is basically visual.

And here we return to the first considerations of this article, for such potentialities as the cinema contains for giving expression to these problems, will be developed only when cinema is treated as an independent art form, rather than as an instrument for the illustration of literary narrative. How little that is understood is evidenced by a recent article by the film critic of the *New York Times*. In a review of the “Best Film Plays of 1943-44” he applauds the fact that “the plays are presented—uncomplicated by the numerous camera directions which used to be the bane of the reader.” When the day comes that the camera—the visual element—ceases to be thought of as an annoying complication by ‘film’ writers who concern themselves with cinema not out of an appreciation of it as a medium, but because the film industry provides the most lucrative employment for ‘writers,’ cinema as an art form will begin to come of age.

A LITTLE ANTHOLOGY
OF
YOUNG MEXICAN POETS
SELECTED AND TRANSLATED BY LLOYD MALLAN

OCTAVIO PAZ

ALÍ CHUMACERO

NEFTALÍ BELTRÁN

EFRAÍN HUERTA

RAFAEL SOLANA

ENRIQUE GUERRERO

ALBERTO QUINTERO ALVAREZ

THE NEW MEXICAN POETRY

Lloyd Mallan

THERE IS A return to Romanticism in the new poetry of Mexico today. Perhaps the reason for this lies in the extreme youth of the half dozen or more major poets who began to achieve recognition in 1936—all of them are as yet under or around thirty years of age. Their themes are disillusioned love, the irony of life and death. However, theirs is not a return to old forms, nor even the old romantic Modernism of Rubén Darío and his followers; they do not strain to create “lyrical beauty” nor do they deal in the familiar trappings of Pan and nymphs and graceful swans. They have created, instead, new forms that depend on the skillful use of language, the subtleties of sound and image. Their work is restrained, reserved to the point where its lyrical qualities are hidden in the poem, are a part of the poem.

Nor does this really new poetry lean too heavily on mysticism and futility, two themes particularly attractive to the earlier lyrical poets of Mexico—and of Latin America as a whole—since such themes lend themselves to all kinds of colorful imagery. They have also renounced the “modern” and bizarre imagery that has become hackneyed with repetition since it was first innovated successfully by such fine, if slightly earlier, poets as Xavier Villaurrutia and Salvador Novo. True, there remain scattered traces of the influence of these men among the work of the younger poets, particularly in some of the poems of Alí Chumacero, but they are well absorbed and hardly noticeable. There are traces, too, of the great Spanish moderns, such as Rafael Alberti, García Lorca, the Machados, Jorge Guillén, Pedro Salinas; but all of these have served, in a sense, as masters rather than influencers. Proof of this lies in the fact that the younger poets of Mexico are as Mexican as Orozco, or Rufino Tamayo, or Rivera, the painters. When they write of so universal a thing as love, they do it as Mexicans; unlike most other Latin Americans, their sentimentality does not spring alone from emotions

inspired by the beloved, but comes too from a coexisting realistic evaluation of love, its transitory qualities, its irony of selfishness, its inspiration of self-pity, its ability to give one a purpose in living, and the irony of this, too. Thus their romanticism comes from the way their feelings are affected by what they see realistically; exactly as their great modern compatriot painters, they observe the life around them with their intellect and interpret it with their emotions.

Death has been a popular general theme of Latin American and Spanish poets through the centuries, but these new Mexican poets do not write of death as something that lives within them daily and haunts their waking hours in all the disguises of living; instead they write of death as does Octavio Paz in his "Elegy on a Fallen Comrade," a death which man and the poet himself must inevitably meet, yet he meets it struggling.

The earlier moderns, of whom Villarrutia and Novo are the best exponents, deal with only the hopelessness of dying. There is a sense of the hopeless in Paz's work, too, but it is of the future and not the present. "When man finally dies," he seems to say, "then all will be futile for him as a person; but what he has done and what all the other dead have done will continue to live in others." It is a hopelessness with hope; and in his powerful and beautiful and startlingly original long poem, "Between the Flower and the Stone," Paz states this theme again and again:

But in the night the water shudders.
A metal sky
oppresses breast and vein
and the horizon trembles in this suffocation.
Water shudders black within its shackles,
while man runs his race from death to dream. . . .

O love that barely blooms and dies,
does all this sunken silence,
all this feverish quiet,
flow naked in your rigid flame
only to name your death? . . .

If I were able,
upon this thirst-illuminated shore,
to sing to man who inhabits it,
to sing to man annihilated by his own thirst! . . .

To man among his fruits and ends.
(The fruits of this earth are the ends of man. . . .

Octavio Paz is not a poet of futility as are his immediate forerunners; for one so young, perhaps because of this, he is a violently bitter poet. There is a continual struggle against loneliness in his verse, and he cries out against dying, against the pettiness of man, even as the others before him have accepted it and embraced it. Paz is a revolutionary poet, not so much politically as in the form and content of his verse; he has exploited the possibilities of word-use, done much to make Spanish a more flexible language, in the same manner as Dylan Thomas has made English so much more flexible. But what is most significant, Paz represents anti-tradition completely. He represents one of the first of the new voices of a truly Mexican culture; he has, of course, even as his colleagues, absorbed the traditions of his predecessors, but he does not like these, he does not like the meek acceptance of fate and futility and mysticism thrust on his people by Spain and the Church; yet these are the only things he knows, so in his work they may be found, but negatively, mingling with his desire for a better reason for living.

Bitterness seems to be a common motivation among all these younger Mexican poets, for Efraín Huerta, a poet of equal importance with Paz, is also "against." He, too, has absorbed and is a part of that which he is denying. But here the similarity ends, for Huerta is mainly a poet of disillusioned love. His two published volumes to date bear the titles: *Absolute Love* and *Line of the Dawn*. Although he has written one poem at least, "Stalingrad Is Still Standing," that seems to contradict the above statement, there are even in this poem lines that reveal his romantic nature:

And thus we watch you, brilliantly erect,
mountain city, child of the river,
daughter of our anguish and faith.

Again throughout his love poems runs the theme of death. The theme is handled exactly as Octavio Paz handles it, by refusing to accept it and by contrasting life against it.

Indigo dawn wounding us like the deaths
we die in dream and love, like kisses
killing hope, farewell kisses, flinging
mirrors upon the sea of daylight. . . .

But the dawn has wanted to rise from the sweet
hot and delicate throat of a young girl.
Tireless and joyous as chaos, the dawn.
Now we may understand humanity's lament,

MEXICAN ANTHOLOGY

now know those sad children
who die from cynicism, forget by weeping. . . .

And now:
here the dream is dream alone,
death alone this: dry death.
Death by whatever means you may choose:
by a carnation crushed beneath your foot,
a kiss softly upon your shoulder,
because some eyes of green shine more than others,

because your hand is a silly hand
incapable of brutal shaking
and the lazy caress and languid . . .
and your soft voice it was
calling me to life.

Both these poets possess an almost unearthly lyrical sensitivity, a fine ear for assonance and a great inventive talent with words. Their work literally glows with color, the one fiery, the other cool and refreshing. They are helping to create a new kind of lyricism, the kind that rises out of the poem, and not the kind into which the poem is thrust. This is also true in greater or lesser degree of Alí Chumacero, Neftalí Beltrán, Alberto Quintero Alvarez, Rafael Solana and Enrique Guerrero.

MEXICAN ANTHOLOGY

OCTAVIO PAZ

ELEGY TO A YOUNG FRIEND, DEAD AT THE FRONT

I

Comrade, you have died
in the burning labor of the world's birth.

And horribly alive,
these things are flowering from your death:
your look, your uniform of hero-blue,
your surprised expression in the dust,
your hands, without violin or rifle,
so nakedly still, so quiet.

You are dead. Irrevocably you are dead.
Stopped is your voice, your blood in the earth.
You are dead, and I do not forget.

What earth shall blossom that does not lift you high?
What blood shall run that does not have your name?
What voice mature our lips
that will not speak your death, your silence,
the stoppered sorrow of being without you?

And lifting you,
lamenting you,
having your name,
giving voice to your disintegrated body
blood to your broken veins,
lips and liberty to your silence,
these things grow within me,
weep for me and call my name,
furiously lift me:
other bodies and other veins,
other abandoned peasant eyes,
other black, anonymous silences.

II

I remember your voice. The light of the Valley
caressing our temples,

MEXICAN ANTHOLOGY

wounding us like swords of splendour,
changing in shadowy lights,
a step of dance, stillness of sculpture
and timid violence of the air
in swirling hair, clouds, torsos, nothing.
Waves of light, so very clear, so empty,
that they burned our thirst, like glass,
engulfing us, voicelessly, pure as fire,
in whorls of resonant whirlwinds.

I remember your voice, your hard expression,
the severe attitude of your hands;
I remember your voice, adversary voice,
your enemy word,
your voice pure with hate,
with tender hate, with fertile hate,
that made the earth burn
and ripen for man in fists like certain fruits,
comrade-fists and fists for combat.
Your heart, your voice, your living fist,
stayed and shattered now by death.

III

Comrade, you have died
in the burning labor of the world's beginning.
You have died when barely
your world, our world, was dawning.
And you carried in your breast, your eyes,
behind the implacable expression of your mouth,
a clear smile, in pure daybreak.

I see you surrounded by bullets,
by rage and marshy hate,
like a tense fallen flash of lightning,
like the bland presumption of water,
prisoner of rocks and blackness.

I imagine you flung in marshes,
fallen forever,
maskless, smiling,
touchless, yet touching now

P A Z

the hands of all the dead,
the comrade-hands of your dreaming.
You who have died among your own, and for them.

NOCTURNE

A soft attack of wings is night.
Beneath her breast all creatures quiver.
Absorbed in self they throb and throbbing
forget themselves and have communion
with the flowing of surrendered hours.

O wind suspended, quiet branch;
unrestrained waters, mute, somnambulant;
filled earth dreaming union with pure skies;
O solitary blood, sweet river,
from which the night is born to overflowing!

And from the sleeping side of man day arises.

AT THE MARGIN OF THE SKY

Banished, at the margin of the sky,
stretched out and alone, I lie
loosed from the world,
from flesh of the Word,
like fallen fruit,
like coal among the ashes dying.

Remembering not my origin nor form.
The world bodyless
and the earth sterile, knowing
neither memory nor touch.
Alone among your stones I lie, kingdom
frozen, total night, of stone, not shadow.

Ah, limit of the world,
hopeless region,
who weeps, who calls to me,
there, beyond my dream?
Leave me among the stones, don't touch me,
weak innocent light, vague form.

MEXICAN ANTHOLOGY

Ah, final solitude,
who touches, calls to me,
dumb and wordlessly,
soft beating in the center of this silence,
hoping never for an answer,
like the voice of a river
calling to the infinite plains?

Don't touch me, leave me among the stones,
nascent wounded sound;
stone fallen as I am among the stones.

I TOUCH YOU, FROZEN FEVER

I

Dense animated nothingness
freezing through our bones
to stretch upon our shoulders,
inhabiting our brain—
monotonous undecipherable drum—
imprisoning our arms,
our thighs with its fever,
its frozen saliva. . . .

O shoreless presence,
gloomy world forboded,
resignation of this touch, these eyes,
this skin upon which hours
travel and devour;
what cold light is this
that sheds its silence
touching things to ice and emptiness?

Is love, then,
a divided terror,
two bodies in embrace
imprisoned by your touchless shadow?

II

Calling you with frigid tongue,
I touch you, frozen fever, warm

P A Z

body palpable yet unaware of me;
let me have your hot bright dust,
your pulsing persevering flesh,
your forboding skin,
my form remembering.

O touch, let me feel my known forms,
lips like my lips,
nimble mortal buds;
inform me, my senses,
that watchful I may be
of something I must know and must know me,
to grasp what I am and you what you are,
to see me as I am.

Daily light of dawn,
love unnoticed, death
forgotten, brief eternity
of consciousness, the dark
mystery which hands beget in air;
something first to set me free
even while imprisoning me,
to hem me in and hem in all,
something I may touch which touches me.

O give me only touch.
In form, where lives alone my being
and your innocence, is reconciled my thirst.

EFRAÍN HUERTA

POEM OF SCORN

for Andrés Henestrosa

*Scorn, so says to you
my wearied tenderness,
is like cold brittle glass
running redly through my veins.*

I

I remember when I walked
through a time apart, a dream removed,
a frozen grave and cemetery,
braving the barrenness of ultimate indifference,

MEXICAN ANTHOLOGY

I brought you my blood
brittle and minutely maddened
by hunger or in reference to this idea of the heart:
dawn alone and certain truths
corroded with nauseous convention
bring back to me
the sweetest virtues
or beat nocturnally
in the nocturnal river of my skeleton.

Betrayed to hope and youth
and the brief gazelle of tenderness,
I shed a slender soft lament
with neither grace nor feeling;
and this life with beast-like face
in bitter insomnias reeling
barely lent me the anxiety
of agony and crime.

II

But now
sadness has been done;
and gray foam breaks
in high and hollow shadows upon me
in horror of stone church steps where beggars
in the sun abase themselves like dogs;
cities sorrow me
with their bitter convent air
and tragic case of a woman none thinks fair—
tomorrow's dawn
will not erase the sorry fog of the soul's affair
(cowardly moon and blind, against a window, sick and pale),
forever tensed example of absence does not fail.
(Absence is a voice
mildewed on contact with the air.)

(Green water: the anguish intact,
enemy of desire and heaven.
Mist and blood upon the hands:
vain is the light on memory shining,
vain the whining marble beast of doubt.)

HUERTA

III

Of my frozen nights and vegetal noises,
of the woman in silk and the honeyed friend,
of my fine statues
there remains not a breeze
on which to lay my hand
and a little of piety.
Of the blue-burning wine,
barely remains the dreamed-up beauty
and a magical murmur.

Perhaps in you, hell adolescent,
O wickedness,
life might have been a moment,
an enigma.
Perhaps in you, ash of fear and hate,
O rancor . . .
Or in that nostalgia
where love decomposes
some fiery camellia
over an indignant skin.

Small honor, and you, admirable prudence,
and you, also, deserted courtesy;
and you, hope, tenderness,
implacable sadness,
light, caress,
wonderful candor;
juvenile tumultuous river,
pleasure and eager voice . . .

And myself I question, closing
the door to worry,
breathlessly giving myself
to the endless day of Scorn.

IV

Metallic truth and night and mystery
with the high dream, the sword unsheathed

at the foot of the unattainable,
 as though a quarrelsome virtue awakens in blood
 to bring a blush to cheeks, discovering
 the good in mud and goodness shattered.
 Love beds become silent: a wounded pillow,
 sheets or knives, a musty embrace.
 And you, sorrowing friend, and you, woman,
 O flowing blushing glass: must you exist
 beneath the brittle sky of life,
 in your spikenard kingdom of desire?

Gray doves flutter on the shore
 of full love, and against life-giving air
 flies passion gray, flies silence
 shattered discordantly to musical splinters.

(Melancholy and destruction, sweat of fever,
 bitterness of abyss: this is love.)

A corn-silk tassel from a sobbing man's expression
 Flowering, insensible, undernourished tassel,
 smooth, serene, fragile tassel, a perfect truth: Scorn.

V

From the splendid summer's morning of the soul's essence bloomed a
 frosty flower;
 and out of this frosty flower came a sentiment;
 and out of the sentiment, misfortune came, black bread of anxiety, gray
 apple, potency of hate;
 but a hate like a tame river, a traitor, with green foam-animals crawling
 over its body.

Neither vulgar hate nor cold Scorn for sale,
 but a flower, a flower that my friend, my wife and brother never saw;
 a delicate flower, soft to touch and words, soft to senses, to the weak and
 moribund senses.

A flower that unfolded before my eyes.

Then let me look to the miracle.
 I said that love's sweetest hour had come,
 that the heart, at last, was earth and water, corn and carnation;
 that the heart came toward me,

HUERTA

became my imperfect lament,
my Scorn.

VI

And now my speech has ended:
this flower is a temple,
a bright signal and a goodbye handshake.
Because truth is the only thing in the blood,
truth blindly and truth brightly,
the robust truth of true men.

Beside the flower of hate and love
blooms this tender flower of anxiety and Scorn.

THIS REGION OF RUIN

I

This region of ruin,
camellia fragility,
lets no one ever sob
but quietly in blood
his intimate sorrow;
this small land
of precise half-warmth,
this acid course of agonies
is, in pure words of piety,
the old, exhausted root,
the rotted marrow of the city.

II

And now:
the dream is nothing more,
death no more than dry death;
death by whatever you may choose—
by a carnation crushed underfoot
by a kiss upon your shoulder
because some green eyes shine more than others,
because your foolish little hand

MEXICAN ANTHOLOGY

is incapable of brutality
and inescapable caress, light and languid,
because your sham is goodness,
ignoring grace of passion,
compassion alien to your face;
and because, at last, your watercolor kingdom,
your music and your eyes of ripe grain
do not pertain to this republic of lament,
nor are they meant for this moist hot forest
languishing, rotted by contempt,
nor to this coppery place where
with a June dawn I dreamed of victory—
And this was your soft voice
it seemed, calling me to life.

ALÍ CHUMACERO

MY BELOVED

Uncovered, my mournful love
with conquerable flesh and chaste as uninhabited,
you shake voices on the bed
and tenderness contrary to my hands,
and I hear the twilight through your body
when as I fall upon you die
I in a faded birth, without sorrow
comparable to the fear of your agony.

With you I clarify the fall
of avalanche or hurricane of roses:
tumultuous apples sigh
telling me that man is conquered,
confused in bitterness and empty looks.
In you I answer the world, and in your body
breathe a taste of tombs;
one night no longer, and your look
persists, implores and conquers in my eyes,
resolved to an extended struggle
where that aerial languor of thought
like material of your own eyes
is what memory becomes.

CHUMACERO

Sometimes you weep and shed
funereal waters of a blind perfume,
as if detached from an old idea
you could come to me, as clear
as an angel sleeping in space,
to leave your evidence, light and life;
and in your tears I watch your soft flesh spurting
as though with them you might extend
or make more probable your existence
pouring the perfume of your dream
over this solitude of you lying nude.

MIRROR AND WATER

In me your soul left only its cold image
and left me to recall that once you were living;
should I look in a mirror and find myself reflected
there I find your eyes and your wax-like silence
still as a fragment of choked-off breath,
as if descending sands
or a tumult of memories
over my flesh might fall
toward the glass in peaceful step.
Do not leaves fall in autumn like long dead phrases
and were not my eyes upon you roses
drowned in your perfume?

If you watch the water, watch
my heart adorned with tombs
beneath the waves that move it,
blossoming among the ruins of your name,
between losing itself in flowering or death
like an eternal waiting or the lamentation
of an impassible Adam once dreaming
with you and your delusive Paradise.
Because on watching yourself against the water,
you watch my thought in your soul suspended.

ALBERTO QUINTERO ALVAREZ

FRAGMENT

When they come to the city to study science,
He watches them arrive and lets out a tragic burst of laughter.
"Now you are here!" he chokes and his laughter turns angry and his eyes
become misted.

"You have left Spring flung upon furrows deprived of seed."
Tomorrow's rain shall come in vain and only form pools in forgotten river
beds.

And the high and fragile birds of winter shall follow later,
Proclaiming the misery of poplar and silence of dust.

"And you here," he laughs in a new and sorrowful mockery,
"Studying the evident relation and formula
To go forth afterwards and subdue her with the exactness and scorn of
masters!

You've left your patient animals to die;
Their thirsty eyes were watching with the submissive silence of beasts,
Which cry wretchedly for relief of their swollen udders.
Also, you've brought your suffering women
So that tomorrow they may wait or beg on the sidewalks,
Carrying your sweet black-eyed child upon their shoulders.

"Away with your deceit! Look at these dead!
These all are dead that you see!
And soon you shall find yourselves with them as brothers.
See how they come and go, eager and sad vagabonds like dogs in the
marketplace,
Nothing may be expected of them, nor you, so long as you do not return
to Spring."

ENRIQUE GUERRERO

YOUR ABSENCE

Formless now
there is no space for you
who are and yet are not;
escaping you recall to me
the pattern of your narrow waist
taking up the void left by your body.

Dwelling in an echo
 your haughty quivering image
 makes no sign of solid presence.
 And confounded I witness
 a light movement,
 a tenuous way of touching me,
 your manner, your smile
 purer, more polished,
 graven in an echo.
 I worship your disdain
 of three dimensional presence,
 of each evening being unattainable.
 And so it goes for me. Everything turns
 toward your formless charm,
 your colorless,
 pure presence.

NEFTALÍ BELTRÁN

POEM

Like a seeded pomegranate or an enormous mouth
 eating stars the universe was expanding
 before the first man seated forever in the middle
 and watching over the earth's creation between clay fire
 and serpent fire between the hollows of eyes and the antennae
 of snails between sperm and virgin expressions
 between fiery roses and ashy camellias
 everything was taking form the voice itself silently silent
 and fruitful was now taking the form of roundness it has
 and only the shoulder was squarely square and joined because
 thus it was supporting all the weight of the world of the universe entire
 and the head as well
 Ah but it had nothing like the fluttering moths
 in full daylight because the Doric columns and arches
 were then like a simple slab of uncarved marble buried
 beyond the culture and civilizations that now
 are modernly archaic between arms and a glass of beer
 all that I might desire raising the banner of the world saying
 here, O beautiful Tyrrhenian Sea where were you then?
 Only the red lilies remained intact
 when the first night fell.

RAFAEL SOLANA

TWO SONNETS

I

As though a net had been woven round the dawn
—each strand a vein—and widely flung
over the sea high and serene of music and the sun
to see it float a moment, then go down.

Then to watch with pain the twilight ebb of tide
leaving hopelessly upon the sand
the shapeless net unguided by a hand
and sadly through its threads and snags abides

Emptiness. But one thing has remained at end of day
filming my sorrowful fishing eyes,
tremulous, alone, pure and crystalline

—As in the empty net a flock of spray—
a salty drop of bitterness of skies.
Who sows love forever harvests dreams.

II

One night in envelope of purest frost
against my window bloomed a rose of snow
and all that night I watched it grow;
but morning saw it melted to a tear, and lost.

Again, a rose of music to my ear
descended softly as the snow; and then became
but empty shadow with the dawn and pain
filled silence, harsh oblivion and fear.

Finally, to my breast came love, a rose
with roots of joy and joyous laughter's ring;
but when I opened wide my eyes it chose

To die in wasted garden, with other lean
and wasted flowers that feigned illusory Spring.
Who sows love forever harvests dreams.

THE MEXICAN POETS: BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

OCTAVIO PAZ was born in Mexico in 1914. One of the editors of the late literary review, *Taller*, he is at present on the editorial board of *El Hijo Pródigo*, one of the finest literary magazines in all of Latin America. Published works: *Raíz del Hombre*, Mexico, 1936; *Entre la Piedra y la Flor*, Mexico, 1941; *A la Orilla del Mundo* (collected works, 1935-1941), Mexico, 1942. In 1943 he was awarded one of a number of Guggenheim Fellowships set aside for Latin America.

EFRAÍN HUERTA was one of the founders of *Taller*, and has been editor-in-chief of *Nuevo Mundo* and editor of *El Popular*. Born in 1914, he has published *Absoluto Amor*, Mexico, 1935; *Línea del Alba*, Mexico, 1936.

ALÍ CHUMACERO is on the editorial board of *El Hijo Pródigo*. He was born in 1914.

ALBERTO QUINTERO ALVAREZ (born 1914) was one of the editorial board of *Taller*. Published works: *Saludo de Alba*, Mexico, 1936; *Tres Ensayos de Amistad Lírica para Garcilaso* (essays written in collaboration with Rafael Solana and Jaime Torres Bodet), Mexico, 1936; *Nuevos Cantares y otros poemas*, Mexico, 1942.

ENRIQUE GUERRERO was born in Mexico in 1914.

NEFTALÍ BELTRÁN has published *Veintiún Poemas*, Mexico, 1936; and in 1937, two pamphlets of poetry, the most notable of which is *Canto del Viento*. He was born in 1916.

RAFAEL SOLANA (1915) contributed to *Taller*. Published works: *Ladera*, Mexico, 1934; *Los Sonetos*, Mexico, 1936.

THREE FABLES

FRANZ KAFKA

Translated by Joseph Kresh

THE VULTURE

THERE WAS A vulture pecking at my feet. Already he had torn through my shoes and stockings, and now he was pecking at my feet. Ever he struck them, then fluttered in restless circles about me, and then went back to his work. A man came by, watched us for a little while, and then asked why I suffered the vulture.

"I am helpless," said I, "he came and began to peck at me. I wanted to drive him away, even thought of wringing his neck; but a creature like this is very strong, and he was ready to spring at my face, so I preferred to sacrifice my feet. Now they are almost torn to shreds."

"I am surprised that you let yourself be tortured so," said the man. "One shot, and the vulture would be finished."

"Do you think so?" I asked. "Do you want to arrange it?"

"Delighted," said the man. "I need only go home and fetch my gun. Can you wait another half hour?"

"I do not know," said I, and stood for a moment stiff with pain. Then I added, "Please, try it at any rate."

"All right," said the man, "I will hurry."

The vulture had quietly listened to our conversation and had let his gaze wander from me to the man. Now I saw that he had understood everything. He soared upward, circled back some distance to gain momentum, and then came plunging his beak like a javelin through my mouth deep inside me. Falling backward with relief, I felt him drowning beyond rescue in my blood which filled all depths and overflowed all banks.

POSEIDON

Poseidon sat at his work-table and calculated. Supervising all the waters was an unending task. He could have had assistants, as many as he wanted, and indeed, he did have many; but because he took his position very seriously, he recalculated everything himself, and so his assistants were but little help to him. One cannot say that he enjoyed his work. He did it, really, only because it had been forced upon him. Indeed, he had often applied for happier work, as he expressed it, but it always appeared, after the most varied proposals had been made to him, that actually nothing attracted

him as much as his present position. It was also very difficult to find something else for him. It would really have been impossible to assign him, let us say, a particular sea. Aside from the fact that the task of calculating would then become not lesser, but only pettier, great Poseidon could never be given anything but a reigning office. And whenever he was offered a position outside the water, the very thought of it was offensive to him; his divine breath became irregular, his bronze chest heaved. Besides, no one took his complaints really seriously. When a Power worries, one must appear to be trying to yield to him even in the most hopeless circumstance, but no one thought of really relieving Poseidon of his position. Since the very beginning he was destined to be God of the Sea, and that he had to remain.

He was most concerned—and this was the chief cause of his dissatisfaction with his position—when he heard of the conception people had of him: that he continually drove through the floods with his trident. And all the time he sat here in the depths of the ocean and calculated unceasingly. An occasional visit to Jupiter was the only interruption of the monotony—a visit, moreover, from which he usually returned raging. Hence he had scarcely glimpsed the seas, only fleetingly during his hurried ascents to Olympus, and never had he really traveled through them. He used to say that he was waiting for that until the end of the world. Perhaps then there would be a quiet moment in which, just before the end, after looking through the last calculation, he might still be able to make a brief hurried tour.

THE REJECTION

Our town does not lie near the frontier. It is so far to the frontier that perhaps no one from our town has ever been there. Waste highlands must be crossed and also broad, fertile country. One becomes fatigued by imagining only a part of the road, and more than a part one cannot even imagine. Great cities, too, lie on the road, much greater than our town. Then such towns, side by side, and on top of them ten more such towns squeezed in, would still not produce one of these giant crowded cities. If one does not go astray on the road, one is sure to go astray in the cities, and because of their size they cannot be avoided.

But even farther than to the frontier, if one can compare such distances at all—it is like saying a three-hundred-year-old man is older than a two-hundred-year-old one—well, much farther than to the frontier is it from our town to the capital. While we do get news now and then about the wars on the frontier, we hear almost nothing from the capital—we plain citizens, I mean, for the government officials have, of course, very good connections

with the capital. In two or three months they can get news from there, or at least they claim they can.

Now it is remarkable, and I continually wonder about it, that we in our town quietly submit to everything which is decreed from the capital. For centuries there has been among us no political change arising among the citizens themselves. In the capital mighty rulers have succeeded each other, dynasties have died out or been deposed and new ones begun. In the past century the capital itself was destroyed and a new one was founded far from its site; later this also was destroyed and the old one rebuilt. But all this has had no real influence on our town. Our officials have always remained at their posts. The highest officials came from the capital, the middle officials at least from the outside, the lowest ones from among us, and so it has remained, and we have been satisfied.

The highest official is the Chief Tax Collector. He has the rank of Colonel and is so called. Today he is an old man, but I have known him for years. In my childhood he was already a Colonel. At first his career was very rapid, but later it appears to have come to a halt; but for our town his rank suffices. We wouldn't be capable of accepting a higher rank among us. When I try to picture him to myself, I see him sitting on the veranda of his house in the market-place, leaning back, his pipe in his mouth. Over him the imperial banner waves from the roof, and on the sides of the veranda, which is so large that sometimes small military exercises are held on it, the wash is hanging out to dry. His grandchildren, in beautiful silk clothes, play about him. They are not permitted to go down into the market-place since other children are not fit for them, but still the place lures them and they at least stick their heads between the posts of the railing, and when the other children fight down below, they also fight up above.

So this Colonel rules the city. I don't believe he has ever yet shown anyone a document giving him the authority. He probably doesn't even have such a document. Perhaps he really is chief Tax Collector. But is that all? Does that entitle him to rule in all the other departments of government? His office is, to be sure, very important for the state, but for the citizens it is really not the most important. Among us, one almost gets the impression that the people are saying, "Now you have taken from us everything that we had, please take us, ourselves, in addition." For as a matter of fact, he did not seize power nor is he a tyrant. Since ancient times the Chief Tax Collector has been the first official, and the Colonel yields to this tradition no less than we.

But although he lives among us without too much difference in dignity, still he is something quite different from the ordinary citizen. When a committee appears before him with a request, he stands like the wall of

the world. Beyond him there is nothing more. One can hear a suspicion of voices whispering behind him, but that is probably an illusion, for he represents the end of everything, at least for us. One should see him at such receptions.

As a child I was present once when a committee of citizens asked him for a governmental grant in aid, for the poorest quarter of the town had burned to the ground. My father, the farrier, who is respected in the community, was a member of the committee and took me along. That is not extraordinary; everyone rushed to these spectacles and one could scarcely see the committee in the crowd. As these receptions take place for the most part on the veranda, there are also people who climb up ladders from the market-place and participate in the affairs up above from across the railing. At that time the veranda was arranged so that about a quarter was reserved for him while the rest was filled by the crowd. Several soldiers watched over everything, standing about him in a semi-circle. Really one soldier would have been enough, so great is our fear of them.

I don't know exactly where these soldiers come from, but in any case, it is far away. They all resemble each other closely: they would not even need a uniform. They are small, nimble, but not powerful, people. Most striking are their strong teeth that fill their mouths too much, and a certain restless, jerky flashing of their small, narrow eyes. Because of this they are the terror of the children and, at the same time, their desire; for the children always want to be frightened by those teeth and those eyes so that they may run desperately away. This childhood terror is probably not lost even by the grown-ups; at least it leaves an effect. There is also something else. The soldiers speak a dialect altogether incomprehensible to us, and they can scarcely get used to ours. Hence, there results among them a certain aloofness, an unapproachability which furthermore corresponds to their character. Quiet, serious and stiff, they do nothing really evil and yet, in an evil sense, are unbearable. A soldier comes, for example, into a store, buys some trifle and remains standing, leaning on the counter, listening to the conversation he probably doesn't understand. Yet it seems as though he did understand it. He himself says not a word, just looks stiffly at the speaker, and then at the listeners, and keeps his hand on the hilt of the long knife in his belt. This is horrible; the joy of conversation is lost, the store is emptied, and only when it is entirely empty does the soldier, too, depart. So wherever the soldiers appear, even our lively people become quiet.

So was it also at that time. As on all solemn occasions the Colonel stood erect and held two long bamboo staves in his outstretched hands. It is an old custom which possibly means: so does he support the laws and so do they support him. Now every one knows exactly what awaits him up on the

veranda, and yet they always would become frightened again and again. At that time, too, the one appointed to speak did not want to begin. He stood opposite the Colonel, but his courage left him then, and he pressed himself back into the crowd with various excuses. And since there was no one else suitable who was ready to speak—of the unsuitable, of course, several volunteered—there was great confusion, and messengers were sent to various citizens, famous as speakers. During all this time the Colonel stood motionless; only his breast heaved noticeably in breathing. Not that he was really breathing heavily; he was just breathing very distinctly, as for example frogs breathe, except that with them it is always so, whereas with him it was unusual. I wormed my way through the adults and observed him through the gap between two soldiers until one pushed me away with his knee. Meanwhile the originally appointed speaker had collected himself and, firmly supported by two fellow-citizens, delivered the address. It was touching to see how, during this solemn speech describing the great misfortune, he smiled continually a most humble smile, which strove in vain to call forth even the faintest reflection on the face of the Colonel. Finally, he formulated the request; I believe he asked only for a year's tax exemption, but perhaps also for cheaper building material from the imperial forests. Then he bowed low and remained bowed, like everyone else except the Colonel, the soldiers and several officials in the background. For a child it was laughable to see the people on the ladders on the edge of the veranda go down a few rungs, in order not to be seen during the decisive pause, and peep curiously from time to time just over the floor of the veranda. This lasted for a while; and then an official, a small man, stepped before the Colonel, tried to raise himself to his level by standing on tiptoes, received a whisper in his ear from the Colonel who still remained motionless except for the deep breathing, clapped his hands, at which everyone arose, and announced: "The request is rejected. Go." An undeniable sense of relief passed through the crowd and everyone forced his way out. Scarcely anyone paid any attention to the Colonel who had unmistakably become a human being again like the rest of us. Only I saw how, really exhausted, he dropped the staves to the ground, sank into an armchair pulled up by one of the officials, and hastily put his tobacco pipe into his mouth.

This entire incident is not unique; it usually goes so. It may happen that now and again small requests are granted, but then it is as if the Colonel did it on his own responsibility as a powerful private citizen. It must—not expressly, but implicit in the mood—formally be kept secret from the government. Now, to be sure, in our town the eyes of the Colonel, so far as we can judge, are the eyes of the government; but still there is a difference here which cannot be fully explored.

But in important matters the citizens can always be certain of rejection. And it is remarkable that to a certain extent we cannot manage without this rejection; and moreover, applying for the rejection is by no means a formality. Again and again, briskly and earnestly, we go there and then go away again, certainly neither strengthened nor made happy, but not disappointed or discouraged either. I do not need to ask anybody about these things; I feel them within me, like everyone else. Nor do I have any curiosity to explore the relationships of these things.

There is, to be sure, as far as my observation goes, a certain age group that is not satisfied. It is the young people between seventeen and twenty. Quite young fellows, therefore, who can have not the slightest conception of the possible consequences of the most insignificant, let alone revolutionary, idea. And it is only among them that dissatisfaction creeps.

THE WALDPOR POEMS

WILLIAM EVERSON

(*Editor's Note:* One of the most valuable creative activities of the War period has been the publication program of The Untide Press, operated by conscientious objectors at Camp Angel in Waldport, Oregon. Everson's *Waldport Poems* were first published in booklet form by The Untide Press, and are here reprinted, by kind permission, because of the significant position they hold in the literature of the War.)

NOTE

THIS SERIES of poems is an attempt to render whole the emotional implications of a kind of life that has become almost universal: the life of the camp, the life of enforced confinement, individual repression, sexual segregation. Everywhere in the world these centers exist, huge impermanent cities housing millions of men—conscription camps, concentration camps, prison camps, internment camps, labor camps. Their effect upon the human spirit is not to be measured with the framework of a generation; the scars will remain for decades.

I wrote these poems during my first six months in a labor camp for conscientious objectors, at the period when emotional reaction to the disruption of my life was at its most intense. I had left behind me a marriage of five years' standing, a new farm, a region wherein I was completely adjusted and had no wish to leave. I was thirty years old, and after an unstable coming-up, I had tasted enough of the good life to be quite reluctant to forgo it.

I point these things out because as a pacifist I perceive clearly that whatever I say should be a testament to the integrity of which the history of pacifism is full: an ability to overlook the irritation of detail for the historical perspective. But as a poet I wanted to grasp the overtones of my immediate experience, to weigh the particular against the general, and try to find between them what would be common to all men. I did not wish to once again concern myself against the war. I had said my say in a previous series, and I knew that the uses of poetry are best directed toward other ends. When I came to write I found that what manifested itself, below my participatory acts, my intentions, my concern for a cause to which I had committed myself, remained the basic mood of separation, of loss, a primal injustice, a huge dissatisfaction that stands as basic a protest to the coercive life as any summary of detail I could muster. It is the kind of attitude which

EVERSON

is impossible to hide, and my one concern was to let it speak for itself. It is my hope that it speaks also for The Conscripted Man, wherever he might be.

—*William Everson*

ONE

That morning we rose,
And broke the fast as had been our custom,
Having fashioned between us too long a time
The pattern of living to scant it at last.
There was haste to be made,
And to that end we strove,
But neither the schedule in its compulsion,
Nor the host of pressures that verge on departure,
Could loosen the brittle clamp of abstraction
That fastened our minds.

For this, we had nothing,
As the patient, prone on the table,
Cannot encompass the massing years
Divorced of his limb.
We moved in our trance,
In utter unrealness,
Till the clock,
That had pulled itself toward its ultimate hour,
Tocked once in its orbit,
And toppled the heavy hanging wave
That taught us the knowledge of loss.

TWO

The bus begins,
And brings the traveler his known cities,
His familiar fields,
But these are outrun.
The sun draws down to inexistence
And night closets all.
The eye being blind the ear resumes the brain's injunction,
Brings him the matron's murmur,
The salesman's oath,
While the bus,
Mad for miles,

EVERSON

Devours distance under its iron,
Till a restless fantastic semblance of sleep
Glazes his mind.

But dawn brings him sight and a new country.
The bus breaks on toward some vast abstraction,
Some dominant myth,
Lurking and harsh behind great woods.
What fastens ahead?
What powerful gravitation,
Unseen but controlled,
Tugs at the roaring winding car and pulls North, ever North?
The traveler abides,
But as it were without volition,
While faces about him blur and converge,
Lifeless masks of the one suspension
That wear the same look;
Till the final stop,
When glimpsing out through the smudgy glass its secretive roofs,
He alights to another life.

THREE

This, then, is our world.
Having entered the gate
Who is there to measure the length of our stay?
The factors that manage that endurance have yet to be formed.
This much we know:
Blood will be poured,
The world in constriction must loosen, unlock,
And the tides withdraw,
And all the wide chaos,
That dwarfs our meager participation,
Must have its great way.
Yet the impassive calendar governs our minds;
And the gate remains,
Broad for departure,
To pass if we choose.
Some of us do,
Openly asking the consequent hurt,
Or by stealth and deceit in the moon's blindness.
Only rumor returns.

EVERSON

We others remain,
Holding within us the vast temptation and the obscure threat,
And nurse the wide cleavage of will.

FOUR

The newcomer marvels,
Seeing about him wherever he looks
Some fine forehead, some sensitive mouth.
For him, in his newness,
Fresh from the world,
No meanness exists,
No bitterness breeds;
None slander,
None thief,
None rail in anger nor smolder in hate,
A wide and abundant sense of acceptance,
A wondrous tolerance,
Exist as they speak.

This he had dreamed,
In his earlier visions,
Projecting the shape of some nebulous life,
And here he would hold it,
Till time taught him less,
Revealing the stubborn bias,
The unseen error that makes human the saint,
Thwarts the idealist,
Marks the martyr,
For none are immune.
What the soul strives for is not to be had,
That too would he learn,
But here for a time it is real.

FIVE

For most, there is prayer.
No food passes lip without the mute blessing,
And the black book carried against the heart
Assures, assures.
By daylight their faces,
Placid with trust,

EVERSON

Reflect the hushed mind.
Doubt does not touch them;
They sound the song of the heart's deep bounty.

But by night they implore.
The bent down bodies beside the beds invoke redemption.
The faces, knotted in adoration,
Stare upward toward God.
The lips plead;
The tongues stammer on truth and revelation.

We others,
Who suffer our God to move unmolested,
Turn silent away,
Ashamed to perceive,
As one turns from the violent coupling of lovers,
Finding the naked soul too harsh to behold.
They are not aware.
Engrossed in that vision they are saved and lost,
Having yielded the sanction of doubt.

SIX

For all, there is Woman.
Some, virginal, keep only the face,
Unreal and resplendent.
Others clutch in their minds
The swollen thighs and the belly's bend.
For most, she is Sin,
Shut from their light,
But curled in their dreams
A white worm in the meaty core.
Whatever we do she makes herself known,
Her secular presence enforcing the mind.
As angel she smiles,
Beatitude flooding the fond face.
As devil she ripples her soft flesh,
The white fork of desire.
All pin up her picture.
Her motionless features watch over sleep,
The photograph only the image of what exists,
Off there, in the distant cities, beyond our brain.

EVERSON

Its owner reclines,
In the vacant bed bound too in her loss,
Or joined to another by the fierce root that circumscribes faith.
We do not know.
That trouble endures,
Cloudy athwart the drenched mind,
Till daylight decrees our day.

SEVEN

No man is alone.
Side by side in the long room
We mingle and touch,
Nudge at the table,
Shout on the walks,
Lie head to heel in the close beds.
Even at stool we squat in our row—
The private act revealed and made known to the corporate eye.

Yet after a time the mind erects its own defences.
The tongue chatters,
The mobile mouth smiles and flouts,
In the steaming baths the nudists dance
And wrestle with joy,
But behind the bone wall
The spirit whistles and sings to itself,
Keeping its inward motion and its transitory grace
While the bodies touch.

But the body itself,
Though it turns and cavorts,
And schools forever to the avid throng,
Does it not tire?

Will it not also,
Some subsequent day,
Aware of stillness and a strange peace,
Be glad to be wholly alone?

EIGHT

The man struck from the woman—
That is the crime.
As the armies grow so gathers the guilt,
So bloom the perversions,
So flower the fears,
So breed the deep cruelties
And the secretive hurts.
And each, the man and the woman,
Too much alone,
Age and grow cold.

Let the man touch the woman.

Now the husband dreams of the wife,
Recalling her clear singing and her solitary grace.

We are not whole.

And she?
Sadly apart she stirs in sleep and makes moan,
Turns and makes moan,
Needing the all-encompassing arm
That now is not there.

NINE

Can the photograph teach?
The simple snapshot,
Made to send home—
Three friends grouped in the lambent morning—
Can it know and instruct?
See the smug youngster,
The posturing fraud and the bearded crank.
Is this what we were?
No, No! We were humble and good!
We were filled with the pleasure of being together,
In our earnest joy and our natural pride,
And not this, not this!

EVERSON

Yet the moment is gone.
Only this endures,
In its consequent proof,
And the future,
Chancing across the faded square,
Will snigger and point,
As we ourselves taunt the ludicrous past
That has now no defence.

But the camera—what does it see?
Something was there,
Tantamount to our lives,
And the shrewd lens,
Probing and delving,
Has perhaps laid bare.
It mocks without mercy;
We suffer ourselves to its casual whim,
Its malice, its scorn, and its fun.

TEN

To sunder the rock—that is our day.
In the weak light,
Under high fractured cliffs,
We turn with our hands the raw granite;
We break it with iron.
Under that edge it suffers reduction.
Harsh, dense and resistant,
The obdurate portions
Flaw and divide.

From the road in the dawns we behold the sea,
In its prone slumber,
Holding the west with heavy ease.
The rock closes it out,
Narrows our sky,
In the morning thaws lets fall its sparse rubble.
We wait, suspended in time;
Locked out of our lives
We abide, we endure,
Our temporal grievance diminished and slight
In the total awareness of what obtains,

EVERSON

Outside, in the bone-broken world.
Confronting encroachment the mind toughens and grows.
From this exigence
Both purpose and faith achieve coherence:
Such is our gain.
We perceive our place in the terrible pattern,
And temper with pity the fierce gall,
Hearing the sadness,
The loss and the utter desolation,
Howl at the heart of the world.

ELEVEN

But at length we learn,
Finding the chastening pattern to school desire:
Not tamper with time,
Neither rowel the future nor finger the past.
The world wars on,
Our subsequent fate involved in its toil,
But the abstract voice that spills from the box
Cannot bring it clear.
Even the purpose by which we have come
Loses distinction,
With the lover's face and the wife's affection,
Here in the wilderness,
The waste of the world,
Bounded between the continent's back
And the absolute West.
We rise in the dawns,
Enter the day;
We eye the weather and watch the sea,
In its manifest purpose,
Marshall itself for another assault.
Whether or not we are heroes or fools
Is hardly the point,
Who have learned in this
That all achievement is only attained
By the thick sequence of forced beginnings
Composing an act,
As the soldier,
Crouching and killing,
Must also know,

EVERSON

Bent by his gun.
Having fastened on this we can only endure,
Immersed in the chorework of the will,
And wade up time,
Where the glacial future,
Frozen and formed in the stone ranges beyond our sight,
Yields only the iridescent trickle
That bleeds from its throat.

PHAEDRA

A Dance Play

KENNETH REXROTH

First Chorus, two people

Second Chorus, four people

Hippolytus

Phaedra

Theseus

The Greek Heroic Age.

Before the palace at Athens.

At the back of the stage, a screen, seven feet high and ten feet wide with a rough black and white sketch of a small, primitive, columned building, of the wooden Doric type postulated in histories of architecture. Along the bottom of this screen is a step about one foot high. At right and left are screens, seven feet high and four feet wide, hinged to the wall or wings, which can be pulled back, on a cord, towards the audience, by members of the Second Chorus.

On the step, at right and left, sit the First Chorus. At right is a young girl, dressed only in a very short, tight black slip, gaudily jeweled, highly painted—a street prostitute. At left is a fat old man, with shaved head, cropped ears, wrapped in a white blanket, a small brass bowl beside him—a beggar. The First Chorus speak with great dignity and treat the principals with a certain condescension. All business with the principals is done by them, except Hippolytus' last entrance.

The Second Chorus sit, two and two, along the walls on either side, in front of the screens. They are inconspicuously dressed, possibly in long dull blue gowns. They are the musicians, mob, commentators, prop men and sound effects. They should conduct themselves with the nonchalance of their counterparts in the Chinese theatre.

On her entrance Phaedra may be dressed in gauze trousers, jeweled brassiere, heavy jeweled girdle, extremely high heeled slippers, a headdress like a Chinese bride's, a great deal of jewelry, bracelets and anklets—a news-boy's idea of a harem queen. These are all removed for her first dance. Afterwards, she wears a single black cloth, tightly wrapped like a sarong, and is barefoot.

REXROTH

Hippolytus wears a white blanket, with his arm and chest bare. The blanket is tied with a cord around his waist, draped over his shoulders, the way Indians are supposed to wear blankets, but somewhat shorter. He is bare-foot. This is the same costume as the beggar's.

Theseus is dressed in a simplified version of a light armed Greek soldier's costume, carries a short sword and a fiddle-shaped shield.

The couch is a stout folding camp bed, covered with a white blanket. The cup is a plain white hemispherical bowl about eight inches in diameter. There should be a set of fragments of a similar cup. The sword is in a plain scabbard, has a cruciform hilt, and looks rather like a child's wooden sword.

If the play is given without a stage, or on the same level with the audience, the step in front of the screen should be dispensed with and the First Chorus sit on the floor. There is no curtain. At the beginning the Choruses walk on, take their places, tune their instruments and begin. At the end, players and Choruses rise and file out.

The dances should be restrained and formal and very slow. They should under no circumstances resemble the expressionist dance fashionable in America in the Nineteen-Thirties.

The make-up should be as formal as possible, or, much better, the three principals and the first chorus should wear masks. If masks are used, the corpses should be dummies.

Except for the jewelry, the colors should be exclusively black and white.

I CHORUS What hour is this, what day?

We have seen the eclipsed sun
Cut by the sea horizon,
The light rush from the gray sand,
The still sea turn black, the sky
Turn black, and the stars come out,
And the wind rise with the dark
With an uncanny rustling
Noise like stiff pleated tissues
Moving with the shadow's edge.

The owls called in the shadow.

REXROTH

We watched from the dark seashore
And the secret icy hair
Of the sun sprang on the sky,
And the ring of the sun's blood.

Behind us all the cocks crowed
In every blackened farmstead,
And every dog cried with fright.

They rose and from the sea and sprang
Apart, and all day the sun
Looked as though it had been bled,
All day the black moon followed,
Hidden across the bright sky.
Soon in the red evening
It will hang in the sunset,
Thin as imagination.

II CHORUS

Our country is very sick.
Crops wither and men quarrel.
Something is wrong with our queen.

A city is like a hive—
Evils possess its rulers
And its life becomes deranged.
The life of the people hangs
On the womb they crown with gold.
Men and beasts become sterile
When it sickens and withers.

Nightmares escape from her dreams
And tramp the seeded furrow.

If she does not heal or die
Soon, we will all have perished.

Theseus wanders in Hell
On a fool's errand; his heir
Plays hermit in the forest,
Forsakes a king's duties for
A saint's gelded wantonry.

REX ROTH

Life should flow from our rulers—
They rape the queen of the dead,
Couple with ghosts, lie between
The freezing limbs of the moon.

Hippolytus is the worst.

There was no better prince once.

It was a pleasure to see
Him staggering hot with wine,
Under each arm a young girl,
Squirming in her red drawers.

He certainly liked young girls.

Yes, the younger the better.
Every year he deflowered
Half the town's crop of virgins.

That's the duty of a prince,
To open bellies for new
Infant armies to march out.
He's a lucky man who gets
A girl unsealed by a prince.
Their daughters make the best wives,
Their sons the bravest soldiers.

He's changed.

Seeing that leper
Turned his royalty sour.

Was it a leper? I heard
He stepped on a corpse one night
When he was drunk and roaring.

I heard he saw a crazy
Blind, bald, toothless, old woman;
And they told him she was once
Herakles' sweetheart and taught
Him to love in his young days.

REXROTH

Do you see that beggar there,
Sitting on the palace steps?
I think he really scared him.
They say he was a king once.
Theseus took his city,
Killed his children, raped his wife,
And hamstrung all his horses.
Now he idles in the woods,
And lives on nuts and berries,
Sleeps with the moon in summer,
And nests in a temple porch
In the wintertime. They say
Those cropped ears can hear
The foolish words of the dead,
The wise words of the undying.

They are hitching up the chariot.
I guess he is leaving soon.

He didn't stay long this time.

(Hippolytus enters.)

HIPPOLYTUS Are the horses ready? Hurry.
I can't get away quick enough.
I feel as though I'm chained with gold
Inside a jewelled prison cell
That gets smaller every hour.
A harem full of manacled
Skeletons, and behind the stone
Eyes in the dry skulls of the king's
Councillors—spiders and sowbugs.

I CHORUS You leave a lot undone.

HIPPOLYTUS Leave it
To the sick queen and her vapors.
Let my father's politicians
See to the quarrying of stone.
Let them build banks, tombs, whorehouses.
Tell them to convert the palace
Into a pyramid. I'll sleep
In it when I have turned mummy.

REXROTH

I CHORUS In the mountains the wind rustles
 The leaves. Deep in the night the deer
 Cry out beyond the edge of dreams.

 The black queen has married the sun.
 All the next fortnight she will grow
 Big with the sun's blood inside her.

HIPPOLYTUS Deep in the forested mountains
 There is a meadow where a wild
 Apple tree grows. For fourteen days
 The buds will open one by one
 As the moonlight grows in the tree.
 The sun's blood will stream from the moon's
 Veins into the veins of the tree,
 And the mist of vision descend
 In perfume and light around me.

I CHORUS They say there was a city there,
 Greater than Knossos or Athens.
 Ten thousand years ago its walls
 Were smashed down, its temples looted,
 Its girls' gauze bottoms and spiced breasts
 Left splattered on the smoking stone.

 Now that tree changes all the dust
 Of riot and debauchery
 To pride and chastity and peace.

HIPPOLYTUS Vein and artery are braided
 Into the branches of that tree.
 It is the cord that feeds my heart
 From her pure compassionate heart—
 Artemis, who hears the world's cry.

I CHORUS Your chariot is ready now.

HIPPOLYTUS Goodby, pesthouse. I only hope
 I never have to smell your stink
 Of lust and murder anymore.

(Hippolytus goes out.)

II CHORUS

They say she is worse, the last
Three days she has refused food.

She is weak now and can scarce
Walk.

Before, she paced her room
Continuously, or called
For her chariot, only
To send it away unused;
Or she rode out aimlessly,
And then returned suddenly,
Forgot what she had gone for;
Or she took the reins herself,
And drove like mad, hair flying,
Lashing the horses, headlong
Nowhere, and then she'd stop short
And stare and fall in a muse.

Sometimes she would spend the day
And night sleeping like a corpse.
Another time her lamp
Would burn all night and we
Would hear her moving around.

She is certainly beautiful.

It is terrible to see
Such beauty destroy itself.

They say it takes two thousand
Years to make beauty like that.

She sat at the loom doing
Nothing. The shuttle fell from
Her hands, or else she flung it
Back and forth between the threads,
Empty.

She called for music,
And then said the sound was like
Hot nails driven in her ears.

REX ROTH

For a week she drank thick wine
Day and night. It didn't seem
To effect her, now she won't
Even taste wine; and at last
She has refused to touch food.

They are bringing her outdoors.

She wants to lie in the sun.

Maybe it will do her good.

(Phaedra is carried in on a couch.)

PHAEDRA Take me back. You shouldn't have moved me.

I CHORUS You said you wanted the sunlight.

PHAEDRA I know. But I don't want it now—
Not that violent animal,
Tearing at my eyelids and bowels.

I CHORUS Phaedra, the sun will give you strength.

PHAEDRA I don't want his strength. I've my own.
It is strength that makes these white thighs
Too weak to walk. I have ample
Strength at my spine's black root—
I don't need all his cheap blonde noise.

I CHORUS Please sit up. Please. Please try to eat.

PHAEDRA Damn you to Hell. Let me alone.
I have more than enough to eat.

I CHORUS This beautiful, beautiful flesh—
Why do you try to destroy it?

PHAEDRA Don't worry. It won't be injured.
This stuff is immortal, passing
From dying spirit to spirit.
Wisdom, lust, chastity and war—

REXROTH

All the gods try to destroy it—
But they never will. They themselves
Live on human flesh. You know that.
Or have you everything backwards,
Like all the other buffleheads?
Give me your hand.
Touch my belly.
This is the phoenix' nest. Someday
I shall burn myself up in it,
And walk from the smoke a virgin.
Come back.
Are you afraid of me?
Give me some wine.
It is pretty,
Isn't it? You know my sister
Bathes in it with her black lover.
People that see them go crazy.
"The gold lion watches himself
In the unruffled forest pool.
He is immortal. His image
Is immortal." That is my flesh.
It will never, never, never,
Die.

I CHORUS Lean back. Let me comb your hair.

PHAEDRA Give me the mirror.
It drinks me.
It has drunk up the smiles of girls
Ever since Daedalus made it—
Before I was born, in Creté.
That octopus carved on its back
Is fat with all those painted lips
Sucked under in its polished lie,
Drowned with the fleeting, pouting smiles
Of expected kisses frozen
Upon them.
Women made these holes
In space, into the otherworld.
The inhabitants of that world
Peer and mock at us, grimacing
In the elastic masks of our

REXROTH

Identities.

And memory—

This is memory. All the world,
Everything, falls in here. This thing
Sends its radiant loneliness
Out like a cloud, and draws it back,
And everything with it. It is
The way the thing breathes. Take it
Away.

Apathy. Do you know

What real apathy really is?

Mountains are apathetic, too.

I see the sun on the mountains

Of ice that I have never seen.

Against their apathy I have

Only pain trickling from their cold

Like a waterfall. That water

Flows through endless, immense forests,

Sinuous and sweet, between the pines

Of two thousand years. The rabbit

Drinks, and the weasel, in the night

Of eyes. Young men go naked there.

What did I say?

You know, at night

The air is full of flying knives—

Daylight my brain is the center

Of a mirror without limit.

I CHORUS 4.

What is it haunts you? Into what
Cobweb of fire have you fallen?

PHIAEDRA

I didn't ask to be involved.

I never wanted to be here.

O God how I wish I were home—

Back home in the ruined city—

My father killed at the altar

In the heart of the labyrinth—

Nothing left but the broken walls—

The crumbling frescoes scrawled with smoke

And the obscenities of Greek

Infantrymen.

I don't want this.

REXROTH

There will never be anything
Like it again. These savages
Will perfect a new savagery.
Once more the art will be refined
Of fanning every appetite
And stifling every desire.
But there will be a difference—
And I shan't be royal priestess.
Do you know that these arms that I
Can hardly lift have held the coiled
Adders of double death like flowers?
This willess hand has struck the dark
With the double axe of lightning?
And here I am, a pirate's whore.
It's not the change that you might think.
A princess is a kind of whore,
The peasant's gorgeous imagined
Bedfellow. We serve to provide
Insatiable appetites
That keep men busy. If it weren't
For us there'd be no history.
Our emperors find us frigid.
When our empires fall, and we pass,
Raped, to barbarian chieftains,
I suppose they wonder, lying
Against our chilly backs, what all
That getting and spending was for.
Still, we teach them to read and bathe.
Enslaved by blood and freed by lust,
The court ladies of dead Knossos
Become prostitutes in Athens.
But not me. I'll never be freed.
I am the proof of the pudding—
What it was all for—my sister
And I, all that blood nastiness
And ruin. She was abandoned
To a drunken Indian, and I
Am being smothered to death.
I'm hot.
Take these clothes from my body.
This barbarian frippery
Dries up my womb like acid hate.

REX ROTH

I wish I were naked in cold
 Water. I want to be taken,
 Plunged in a freezing cataract,
 My flesh burst with monstrous male flesh.
 My mother's demoralized womb
 Bore me, that first had borne the bull.
 Saluting soldiers, and shivering
 Peasants and prostrate worshippers—
 Their appetites sent them to Hell,
 Chasing each other like lewd dogs.
 Let them howl. I am escaped clean.
 Only love's absolute will fill
 The desire they have left with me.
 The best do *not* rot away, I
 Am where I do not want to be,
 Trapped in a net of illusion,
 A stranger amongst savages,
 But I am not terrified. Do
 You hear me? I cannot be touched.
 Help me up.
 I want to stand up.
 Hold me.
 Stop that fumbling.
 I am
 Going to dance.

I CHORUS Phaedra.

PHAEDRA Shut your
 Mouths and hold me.
 I will be all right.
 And take off my clothes.
 All of them.

*(They support her as she begins her dance. When she
 breaks away she staggers, but gains strength rapidly.)*

I CHORUS It is the Minotaur dance,
 That she danced with her brother,
 In the dark on the bloody floor.
 The dance of the fire tangle
 That rules the knotted bowels,

REX ROTH

The dance of the netted sun,
The black sun in the red earth.

II CHORUS It is a terrible dance
 To watch, ordinary folks
 Should not look at things like this.

I CHORUS She taught the king the Heron dance—
 The rigid erotic hover
 Of the male and female virgins—
 The labyrinthine procession;
 But Theseus will never see her
 Dance like this. It is what his dance
 Is for; but he will never know.
 For ages the Athenians
 Will tread those steps that she taught him;
 But they will be pointless, headless.
 There will be no one at the heart
 Of the labyrinth—no one there
 To do what she is doing now.

(At the end of the dance Phaedra sits down abruptly, woodenly, and stares straight ahead. The right screen reveals Hippolytus. He does not speak or move. She turns her head stiffly and sees him.)

PHAEDRA The heart steals the lizard's instant.
 I am nailed to the wall.

HIPPOLYTUS I came back. I have lost my sword.

PHAEDRA I found it. I have it here.

II CHORUS His sword was hidden in her
 Bed, in cloth that smells of her.
 His face blanches, but he comes
 Forward to take it from her.

PHAEDRA Why are the hilt and scabbard
 Sealed together, the seal stamped
 With a five rayed star? I tried
 To draw the blade and could not.

REXROTH

HIPPOLYTUS It is my father's sword, which he
Left with me, and I have taken
An oath that it shall not be drawn.
The witch Medea forged it.
It is an heirloom in Athens.
It has been drawn enough. Too much.
He gave a symbol of power;
But I took from him a symbol
Of my responsibility.
I have sworn never to draw it,
And never to be without it.

PHAEDRA You spend all your time hunting;
Don't you ever need your sword?

HIPPOLYTUS Do you want to know my secret?
I will tell you. I do not hunt.
That is just a tale to mislead
My father. Have you ever seen
Me bring home game? Have you ever
Seen blood on my spear or arrows?
He thinks I give the venison
Away to beggars and peasants.
Have you ever seen me eat meat?
I tell him I have a surfeit
At the campfire and need a change.
I have vowed never to take life,
I have taken on the penance
For a career of lust and blood.

PHAEDRA I thought you were devoted
To Artemis the huntress.

HIPPOLYTUS Artemis the huntress of souls,
The healer and the avenger,
The lady of the moon filled lake,
She is living retribution,
The peace that unties illusion,
Renunciation that gains all,
The myriad breasted virgin,
The mirror that reflects the sun—
Pure in the dark night of the soul.

REXROTH

- PHAEDRA I am amazed. I cannot
Believe it is you speaking.
I have loved and hated you,
And for all the wrong reasons.
I saw and loved your pride, but
I have hated you, thought you
One of these Hellenes, sensate
Till they are insensible.
They're so sure, and plot the moon's
Course with their machinery.
Someday they may discover
It's held in its orbit by
The menstruation of women.
Come here.
Come and take your sword.
- II CHORUS The sword lies in her soft lap.
As he takes it by the hilt,
Her hands cling to the scabbard.
- PHAEDRA Someday you will draw this sword
That Artemis seals shut now.
When you do, you will kill me.
- II CHORUS Hippolytus is afraid
Of her. He takes the sword, but
His whole body is trembling.
- PHAEDRA Je fonds comme la neige
Sur les montagnes d'été.
- II CHORUS She spoke in her own language.

Hippolytus has not moved.

Now she weeps violently.
- HIPPOLYTUS What did you say? Why do you cry?
I never hated you. Always
I have pitied you. Certainly
I do not hate you now. Tell me.
What is the matter? I know now

REXROTH

I have not been alone. I can
Tell you now how much I love you.

PHAEDRA You do not know, as I know,
 You can never understand
 As I can—I do not weep
 For our private misery,
 But for the chaos of the world.

HIPPOLYTUS I do not know what to say. I
 Do not think I understand you.
 You have a riddle for a heart,
 And I am only a young man.
 I have been tortured by conflict.
 I have tried to find my duty.
 I do not know if I have failed.

PHAEDRA Realization is hard
 To recognize. It's like pain
 In a nerve you've never used—
 Like the pains of childbearing.

HIPPOLYTUS I'm not sure. I believe I'd know.

PHAEDRA If you saw her, are you sure
 You'd recognize Artemis?

II CHORUS Hippolytus is dead white.
 He can hardly move at all.

HIPPOLYTUS I think I would. I think I have.
 I want . . .

PHAEDRA Do you want me?

HIPPOLYTUS I want
 What you want.

PHAEDRA No you don't. But I
 Will take you. Maybe it is what
 I want.

REXROTH

HIPPOLYTUS I want you to take me.

I CHORUS They are dancing together.
The prince and the young queen dance.
They dance the dance of the world
That they alone rule over.

It is hard for him to dance.
He must follow her swift steps
As she dances on bright air.

On the rock in the sea's waste
The sea eagle lives alone.
She nourishes her children
On the poisonous sea snakes.
She flies in front of the sun,
Two snakes twisting in her claws.
Once a year her husband flies
To her from the land over
The sea. They mate in midair.
The sun is at the zenith,
The full moon at the nadir.
The heart hangs in a gold web.
Moonlight streams up through the earth.
The birds have vanished in fire.

(The stage is darkened gradually to a blackout at the climax of their dance. After a brief interval the lights come up to moderate dimness—Hippolytus and Phaedra are gone.)

(The girl sings.)

I CHORUS Lie still. Let your mirror lie.
Lover, look not on the rose
Love has shattered in your hair.
Kiss me. Turn and go to sleep.
Lie still. Our youth goes by us
Like dreamless sleep, soft footed
As our heartbeats and as quick.

(Phaedra and Hippolytus enter.)

II CHORUS

They are coming out.

They look
Like dead people.

The queen moves
As though she had lost her skin.

You think so? I think the prince
Looks as if there was nothing
Inside his skin.

I suppose
Love like that is wonderful,
But I could do without it.

PHAEDRA

Stop. Look at the million stars.
Do you suppose that someday
They will put us in the stars?
And when you rise they will yoke
Bullocks to the sharpened plow,
And when I set, call the ships
From wandering in the islands.
Stop. No more.
Don't kiss me now.
Maybe they'll separate us
With the river of heaven,
And allow us only once
A year, when we lie against
The sun, to come together.
It's likely to be like that.
We will have to pay for this.
Life, like any property,
Is acquired by theft.
My love.

HIPPOLYTUS

I have never known anyone
Like you. I did not know there was
Anything in the world like this.
I can never love you enough.

PHAEDRA

O lover, lover, lover—
I can't call you that enough.
I knew, but I have never

REX ROTH

Found it before. I have been—
For all my lust—a king's wife.
That Aphrodite who turns
Men's hearts inside out never
Haunted the bedside during
My scrimmages with Theseus.

HIPPOLYTUS Hush. Let me forget my father.
Tonight we are going to start
To make ourselves new memories.

PHAEDRA People have tried that before.
Memory, unhappily,
Is not some wandering ghost
That the mind can dispossess,
But living bone that our acts
Made powerful over us.
I'd like to forget so much—
But I can never forget.
He may return at any time.

HIPPOLYTUS Impossible. Come back from Hell?
He has broken in his last gate.
This one will stay shut behind him.
He's there to stay. No love sick girl
Will give him a clue to that maze.

PHAEDRA I am afraid you do not
Know the vast frivolity
Of the economy of Hell.
Orpheus overturned it
With a song; and Theseus
Never lacks for stratagems.

HIPPOLYTUS I don't want to hear it. Kiss me.

PHAEDRA Besides. If we really have
Found the bliss we think we have,
The glamor of it will shine
Even in that cloudy place,
And he will sense its meaning;
Or else our sin will call him home.

REXROTH

One or the other, someday
He will turn up, the kidnapped
Persephone tagging him
Like a frolicking kitten.
The world's destructive children
Dictate their own terms to fate.
It's people like you and me
Fate traps and the Furies haunt.

HIPPOLYTUS I'm sorry. I can't be worried.
You lie here philosophizing,
And all I can think of is this curve
Of this smooth belly—these dimples
Where this proud back and buttocks join.

PHAEDRA O my love.
Is that what you are?
I call you that.
I hope you are.
I can't believe it.

HIPPOLYTUS How can you say that? For ten years—
Since he brought you back from Creté—
I hardly dared to look at you
For fear I would reveal myself.
You have stood by me in his court,
And your perfume swept over me,
And I have been struck blind with it,
And not known what I was doing.
Or the thought of you has stopped me
In some drunken brawl, and my brain
Has been stripped and sprayed with pepper.
Do you think a live man will take
A goddess as love's surrogate,
If he can have mortal female
Flesh in which to clothe his worship?
While her immortality poured
Into me I could forget you.
The rest of the time I could force
Myself to think of you as his
Embodied lust and disaster.
If I'd not forgotten my sword,

REXROTH

I'd be in the mountains tonight,
 Drunk with her immortality.
 Maybe I'd never have come back.
 I think she might have opened to me
 Fully, taken me into her,
 Merged my will with her turning disc.
 It is too late now, and I feel
 This has not been an act of will.
 It should have been made to happen—
 Not just have happened anyhow.

PHAEDRA

Lover.
 Do you know what you're
 Saying?
 Have you found vision
 In a trance under a tree?
 Or have you found it elsewhere?
 I lay completely open
 To you. Did you find it then?

HIPPOLYTUS

I think I did. I know I did.

PHAEDRA

You know indeed.
 Do you know
 I am a monster's sister?
 Do you know what vision costs?
 We are each of us tied up
 In the inside of a glove.
 A great pride or a great lust
 Can cut the knot and reverse
 The glove. There's no other way—
 Vision—evisceration.
 The pride must be forged so pure
 It fits the lust as a sword
 Fits the wound as it cuts it.
 That sword with the blade sealed shut
 Is the sword of perfect pride.
 Have you the right to a sealed
 Scabbard?

HIPPOLYTUS

Once more I do not know
 If I understand you at all.

REX ROTH

But I wonder. Are you so sure
You have the power to be the wound
Only an undrawn sword can cut?
I would rather lie under your
Dragging hair and drink your kisses
Than bandy mysteries with you.
I know that I have wanted you
For years, and at last I have you,
And I am going to keep you.
It's my love against your wisdom.

PHAEDRA My wisdom is not so deep
That you can't understand it.
It is just the end product
Of a hundred sailors' queens
That slept as deep in the bride
Beds of Knossos as they sleep
On the floors of looted tombs.

HIPPOLYTUS Kiss me. I'll pay you in full.
What do you want? There is nothing
I have that I haven't given.

PHAEDRA That will you took ten years to
Sharpen, what should you have done
With it once it was perfect?

HIPPOLYTUS Would I have given it to you?
Is that what you mean? I don't know.
I doubt if you want submission.

PHAEDRA Want it? Dear child. I can get
Submission from Theseus
Or any blue eyed sailor.
Those boys you sent to Knossos,
The lovers of the serpent
Priestess that coupled with her
In the room that my brother
Kept drenched with the blood of girls—
Why do you think they were killed
Before they saw the daylight?
I can only be possessed

By an act that is its own
Memory.
You have it wrong—
Your wisdom against my love.
Only the wise can be proud,
Only the imbecile love.

HIPPOLYTUS There's been a labyrinth too long
Under your feet, and now you have
An inhuman, labyrinthine heart.
I want the ordinary bliss
Of a human woman's body,
Not a wedding with black nothing.

PHAEDRA You forgot your Artemis.
You would have been her husband,
Dark moon or full.

HIPPOLYTUS I can choose.
I choose the bright hair on your womb.
I reject these strands of blackness
You are trying to spin around me
Like a hungry female spider.

PHAEDRA All right. I make the same choice.
I can take you to a place
Beyond memory, beyond
The sound of talkative Greeks.
There is a place, a crossroads
In the Italian jungles,
Where fugitives from burned out
Troy and Knossos have settled.
It is a country of wolves,
A city with a single
Mud street and cabins of mud
And sticks; but men of our race,
My people's and your mother's,
Struggle with oblivion there.
Thin lipped men with narrow waists,
And long narrow faces,
The wisest men left alive,
Wiser than Egypt's mummies,

REXROTH

Drain the marshes and teach the
Foolish aborigines.
They'll die out. They're not enough.
The wilderness is too big.
A thousand years of rural
Idiocy may go by.
But their building and teaching
Will last in those savage brains.
And someday they will pay the heirs
Of Theseus in his own coin.
I could make you a king there.
My royalty is holy
There; I am the only one
Left who can perform those rites.
And I could be your wife there,
Not a Greek's elegant whore,
But the sacred wife who lights
The hearth fires of a new race.
And you could draw that sword there
And bathe me for my marriage
In the immortal blood of bulls.

HIPPOLYTUS I will let my father found states.
I don't even want to head one.
I have no desire to butcher
Bulls just to make men immortal.
I would prefer that history's
Senseless wheel ran down and the wheel
Of man's appetite that wants to
Go on spinning forever, stop.
They are firewheels made by torches
Whirled in the dark.

PHAEDRA What do you want?

HIPPOLYTUS You. For the rest, I'll wait and see.
Time is a coiled snake, and deadly
If trod upon.

PHAEDRA That sounds wise.
It's just procrastination.
I can take what I can get?
All right. I take everything.

REXROTH

It's now or never? This now
Is never. Kiss me. Take me.
You can have the power now
To take me beyond return.
But what returns if you do,
Is your responsibility.
Now do you know what I mean?

HIPPOLYTUS

I understand you. I can see
Fire spray from our union and burn
Down the world, and burn us with it.
Let it burn. We are all burning.
This hand burns. Look at the others
That fall like burning leaves, senseless
Through Hell's cold circles forever.
Your eyes are burning, and the stars
They watch burn, and the reflection
Of the stars in your eyes burns too.
Let this fire fall away in fire,
Like water poured into water.

(Phaedra stands.)

PHAEDRA

Stand up.
Give me back your sword.
Drink before you burn. This cup
Is the brain pan of Minos.
In the starlight, the red wine
Is black as blood in a ditch.

(As Hippolytus drinks from the cup which she holds up to him, he drops her dress and she draws the sword.)

II CHORUS

Look. They are dancing again.

Again? How can they stand it?
Twice in a day would kill me,
And they haven't eaten yet.

If I was Hippolytus,
I would be afraid of her,
Waving that sword and drinking.
She might cut someone with it.

REX ROTH

They look like crazy people.

Like people that died crazy.

I CHORUS

Sure footed as sleepwalkers,
They dance on the shifting beams
Of doom's unmeasured levers.

The snake stirs in the earth's core.

The sun hangs in the Bull's horns,
Caught in the Hyades' net.
The moon moves from the Bull's loins.

The snake climbs the last mountain.

The double headed eagle,
The firebird, flies from the fire.

The five planets crown the snake.

Act and power are mirrored
Pictures in each other's eyes.

The snake crawls into the sun.

The torch goes out, the firewheel
Vanishes in the orb of fire.

The sun's seed is drenched with blood.

World's bloom in their flaming hair.

An invisible crystal
Hangs where the sun has gone out.

(When the climax of the dance is reached Phaedra and Hippolytus sustain it, perfectly still, for several seconds, and then spring apart, each with one mechanical leap, downstage, she to the right, he to the left.)

II CHORUS

What is the matter with them?

REXROTH

I CHORUS They came together like snow
 Whirled in a coiling blizzard.
 They mingled like falling rain.
 They broke like a falling stone.

(Neither move. The left screen reveals Theseus. Phaedra runs across the stage with small, swift dance steps, the cup and sword still in her hand, presses against his body and looks into his face.)

PHAEDRA The lictors of Hell, are they
 Sentient beings, or merely
 Automata created
 Especially for the purpose?

(She runs out, to the left.)

THESEUS What's the matter with her? Is she drunk?

II CHORUS He circles away from him,
 His eyes are like a wolf's eyes.

 His father is astonished.
 His feelings are very hurt.

THESEUS What's the matter with you? Aren't you
 Glad to see me? Stop staring at me.
 You can be sure that I'm still alive.
 I've had a hard trip and I need rest.
 They locked me in the bottom dungeons
 Of Hell, but their walls are as flimsy
 As smoke, and I walked right straight through them.
 Persephone wouldn't come with me.
 Although she is a living woman,
 She is at the mercy of the dead,
 And wanders in the devil's prayers.
 However, I had a night with her
 Before they caught me. She liked it, too.
 I was her first real man in six months.
 We were the only live things in Hell,
 Except for a bull that got lost there
 Years ago. They were afraid of it.
 When they found out they could not hurt me,
 They tried to get the bull to kill me.

REXROTH

I just got on the poor thing's back, rode
Him out through the closed gates, and came home.
I put him in the stable with your
Horses, you want to watch out for him.
I'm the only one he'll let touch him.
He's a sort of relative, in fact
The bull that the queen's mother once loved.

HIPPOLYTUS The queen has been violated.

THESEUS What? What did you say? Speak distinctly.

HIPPOLYTUS I have violated your queen.
I have raped your wife. What are you
Going to do about it?

THESEUS Nonsense.
What are you talking about? You mean
You gave her comfort in my absence?
Look my boy, I am a man of the world.
What do you think I thought would happen?
Do you think that I thought that I could leave
A passionate woman to the care
Of a hot blooded young sport like you,
And nothing happen? You are my son.
I'd be ashamed if nothing happened.
We were never happy. I never pleased her.
She wanted something I haven't got.
I planned it this way. If I hadn't—
I'd have sent you to the provinces,
And left her in the care of eunuchs.
I'm glad it turned out well. I hope
You give her pleasure and me grandchildren.
If you'd both like, you can have Creté
For your province. Restore the country.
Well? Speak up. Stop that foolish staring.

HIPPOLYTUS You infamous, infamous man.
I don't wonder Hell spewed you out.
You're a walking Hell of your own.
You have destroyed a dozen wives,
And all your children, and cities

REXROTH

Full of other men, and their wives
And children, the poems of poets,
The visions of artists, the dreams
Of the wise, you destroy them all.
You think there's nothing you can't smash.
You can't smash me. I defy you.
I am where your power ends. Here.
Me. Do you hear me? I smash you.
Let me go. Let me out of here.

(He goes out, to the right.)

THESEUS

Fiddlesticks. He will get over that.
He won't be able to keep away
From her if she gets him that excited.
She never had that effect on me.
If I had been better educated,
And had better manners, and a stock
Of high flown talk . . . I've had a hard life.
I'm not young. His mother was my type.
They'll make a fine pair—like his mother
And I did once, but not so brawny.
Where is the queen? Go and bring her back.

(The girl goes out, to the left. The beggar points as she pushes out the screen and reveals Phaedra, standing against the wall, dead, covered with blood from the waist down.)

I CHORUS

She is dead.

A few moments
Ago she was still living.
I could see her standing there
Listening to you and your son.

The sword is drawn at last. She
Has impaled herself on it.

(Theseus crosses the stage. He lifts Phaedra's face, brushes the hair from her forehead, looks silently into her dead eyes, and finally, with a sigh, lets her head fall. He notices the broken cup.)

THESEUS

She dropped the cup, but there's no wine spilled.

REXROTH

She must have drunk it all. That's a lot
Of wine for a young woman to drink,
Her father was a big headed man.
She must have been drunk. I guess she was
Out of her senses when she did it.

*(The Second Chorus bring in Hippolytus, dead, his arms
and legs obviously broken, smeared with dirt and blood.)*

THESEUS What has happened? Is he badly hurt?

II CHORUS When he went to get his horse
The bull trampled him to death.
We were too late to save him.
One of the grooms was killed, too.
The bull broke down the barn doors,
And escaped in the darkness.

THESEUS Let them lie together on this couch.
Just a little while ago, I guess
They must have been happy lying here.
What a terrible thing to happen.
And so suddenly. I should have stayed
Away. I am a good-natured man.
But everywhere I bring disaster.
I am just Theseus, a bawdy
Old campaigner, why should things like this
Have to happen to me all the time?

I CHORUS The sword of a Russian witch,
Proud past belief, the evil
Memory of a beastial
Queen long dead.

They could not win.
Her love was not strong enough,
And her vanity took flesh.

His frail pride could not withstand
That lewd hungry animal.
It walked forth alive from him.

REXROTH

Out of vision generate
The perfected grace of bliss,
The terrible things that wait
Behind substance, seeking form.

Impure intention is damned
By the act it embodies.

Each sinned with the other's virtue.

They go out of the darkness,
Onto a road of darkness.

The wind turns to the north, and
The leaves rattle. An unknown
Bird cries out. And the insects
Of a day die in the starlight.

SOLDIERS' POETRY DEPARTMENT

Editor's Note: These verses, which are reprinted from Dwight Macdonald's magazine "Politics," were accompanied by the following communication: "Enclosed you will find several poems of a soldier who has recently become politically mature by reading 'The New Republic,' well-informed from 'PM,' and made confident of a new literary renaissance by reading the poetry of Merrill Moore and Karl Shapiro. His fountain pen has barely tapped the wellsprings of a tremendous love for humanity and confidence in the future of the present social order. . . . Should they come to publication, I should appreciate it if you were to mention me merely as J.L., 1st Lieut., Medical Corps."

our joes

there are two jews in our outfit, joe,
two donkeys and a jackass, joe,
 and three small toucans, also named joe
and we treat them all just like men
 they all are men
 they bleed
 they fight
 they hate
 they are our buddies and our allies
 like the chinese
 yugoslavs
 and recently, but only recently,
 venezuelans.

last night my toucan came back with a japanese eye,
 two days ago, joe (the jackass) brayed at the right time during
 a morale lecture
 and i know he understands and hates fascism too;
 he knows that beneath a dictatorship
 he would have less chance of coming into his own
 than under a democracy.
some men will have it the japs are human,
 but are they?

joes are more human than japs any day
 and no japs are named joe
 q e d

SOLDIER'S POETRY

have you ever seen a jap in a px
or in g i shoes
or defended in yank?
have you?
ever?
no?

our joes do all these things and they are americans
red-blooded and fighting heroic americans
cocky khaki
alive drab americans
just like you too, maybe, you jew who reads my poem
or you, you jackass,
or even you, you toucan.

glossing's gloss

you know why there are no atheists in foxholes?
because there is no god in foxholes;
true there are pits in the sands of the islands of the south pacific
and there are men in the pits in the sands of the islands of the south pacific
and there is grace in the hearts of the men in the pits in the sands of the
islands of the south pacific
and the commanding officers of the camps put the grace in the hearts of
the men in the pits in the sands of the islands of the south pacific
since the division neuropsychiatrist told the commanding officers of the
camps to put the grace in the hearts of the men in the pits in the sands
of the islands of the south pacific,
because by general directive of the surgeon general's office which itself
is subject only to the will of god so far as we know this was a good
thing.
actually the men do not exist to be either religious or atheist
and the foxholes are not put there to try their faith
the men are there to fight
by general directive
emanating from almost the same sources
and for almost the same reasons.
perhaps they are fighting for the grace which enables them to fight for
the grace for which they are fighting.

et iterum venturus

you must know, sean, that last night
as i lay beside the new hay i saw a vision of golgotha

SOLDIER'S POETRY

where beloved jesu had become old and wizened
and white-bearded and moustached
and had thick glasses
with rims;
and the men round him were armed not with spears
but with sickles and hammers and ukases
surrounded they him and hung
beside him two thieves
on double crosses
bukhárin
zinoviev

and when he died a red star appeared in the east over bedlam
they held sponges to his lips and these were moistened
with the bitter blood of betrayed workers
and he cried out saying,
szob tze beh cholera bisabrallyeh, i am the insurrection and the life,
and ágain,
ich hob dir in bod—no taxation without representation
and even further,
a bas, a bas, a bas, a bas, abavit abat, abamus abatis.

his suffering was past all n duhring
the engels of the dead came and comforted him
saying, lo, we are the agents of historical necessity,
we are very small, formerly
we were very large our quantity having been transformed
into quality.
the women came to take him to the tomb
thesis took his right arm
antithesis his left
synthesis
his feet
and he
was
carried away.

glory to him who was washed in the blood of the lumpenproletariat.
i have seen the signs of the imminent class wars
(curry a liason, curry a liason—a crisis has risen)
they are pulling down the settings where the grapes of wrath
was filmed.

SOLDIER'S POETRY

and whether you call him marx or trozky
abraham lincoln or lenin or artemus ward
or william dean howells or bret harte

* it is all the same

it is all the same

and he will come again

just watch and see.

(from)

SLEEPERS AWAKE ON THE PRECIPICE

KENNETH PATCHEN

As I **CAME** down past the cages I couldn't help thinking such a damn stench, and in that rain and all—you'd wonder what the devil they meant by it. So the field having a woman putting seeds in the ground, I mosied over there.

Twenty minutes later I asked her what she had the Bar-S in a Circle brand on her fundament for. Keep my big mouth shut—she started in to cry and relate happenings "out of her life." *Well*, I'd heard that sort of gis before. Frankly, as you might say, it didn't make my heart bleed, and I told her to get some clothes on and go see did the chickens need an injection or two against the pip maybe.

But she did say one thing that made me turn the machinery on. She asked me what I had done and who was after me. I could have laughed it off, but I sort of liked planting seeds with her—rain or no rain, as the case may be. Don't get your milk in a boil worrying about me, mam. Anything I got coming I can take. Just then a man rode up on a horse. He didn't even look at me. He jogged over on his silver spurs and commenced to belt the beejasus out of her.

If you've ever ridden along on a horse with a big Bar-S in a Circle on its ass you'll know how I felt as I hit the next town. It was, of course, still raining (of course). The clerk in the first store said yes they had umbrellas 6.75. The horse can get wet, I told her, to hell with the horse, he catches cold he can sneeze his fumulary head off, it's me, I, the gent with too much sense to ask what you're doing this night of all nights, right at this moment I'm concerned about, and a small umbrella, eh, without the ribs of gold, at, say, now 1.50? Would you believe it, I went to twenty-three of those stores without finding the article I wanted under five smackers! and oh it's Equal Rights and Frigidaires, is it?—millions spent keeping Cows Contented—so I went to an hotel until the weather should get clement.

Now—you've guessed I'd get a bitching here too—the only room available already had a fifteen year old girl from out West somewhere in it. One of the things I've learned is to make the best of things, to take the sluggy with the frezoo. I decided to iron my best shirt. When I put the plug in all the lights went out. I don't mean just in the room, but all over

town—maybe the whole state for all I know. What you need is a fuse the girl said. Maybe you're right, I told her; put some coffee on while I go down and rustle one up.

All right, I pressed the lobby button and the elevator took me up to the seventh floor. Thumbed it again and this time drew the eleventh. After maybe half an hour of that I concluded to hell with this crappy game and walked down. Like sin's birthday, candles by the thousand—and the manager really in a sweat because calls coming in from everywhere it seemed the electric power in the whole country had gone blooey. Mass suicides any minute now—NO RADIO! God help us! God help us! God he'p us (below the Mason-Dixon)! Ah, yes, a cool head was needed. Culture must be preserved—and *in our time*, too. Plenty nice fellah, I scuttled down cellar, the manager, all out of fingernails, chawing away now at his wrist stumps, panting at my side. And it was only that the horse had kicked all the wiring hay. You nasty unpatriotic animal. But I fix 'em up, eh, Joe. Sure, the old life blood again, folks.—And that explains the elevator.

In the lobby again I saw a dark man with a box like you keep alligators in. While I watched he lifted the lid off and about ninety little Indians of both sexes jumped out and started to chase each other. That is, the Braves the Maidens—and when one got caught, *well!* it was strictly not for the kiddies, though the tallest wasn't more than six inches. What do you suppose their gestation period is? I asked the manager, but, his mouth being full of arms, he just stared at me. Probably didn't know anyway and I had a shirt to iron.

She handed me a cup of very bad coffee. What's the idea? Oh, she said, you mean my uncles. That makes no difference, uncles, I said, why are they both in my bed?

Red mustache, the one with my shirt on, had his eyes fixed on the ceiling. Find a really nice one and you can mail it to your mother, I said. He unnosd his pinkie. Uncle no. 2 had a brown beard over a startlingly beautiful face. Something about him made me feel like crying.

I got out my writing things and started to do my homework. You maybe an enemy agent? mustache said, wiping one off on the pillowcase. I pushed my teeth out and made a noise like buying scrap iron. The girl for some reason put her hand on my shoulder, and I for some reason put mine on her twataumaycallit—forehead, that is.

I'm frightened, she said.

Five chairs. Three beds. A large table. Writing desk. Flowered carpet. Bible on the radiator—signed to L. M. Switlend, Xmas, 1924 . . . from "your Nannie." A superb toothpaste ad in six bright colors over the bath-

tub. Three quarters of a roll of pink tissue on the wicker hamper. Town of 8000 souls. Not much doing in any direction, *you might suppose*.

Why?

I don't know.

You don't know why you're frightened?

Yes. That's it.

Well, I'll tell you.

After I told her I looked over at the uncles.

Jesus H. Christ! What are they up to now?

That's a game they have, she said.

A game!

Yes. They call it Let's Change Heads.

I gathered up my junk and said I'll be seein' you around, kid. I've things to do, and what I need right now is a nice quiet place to do them in.

I'll go with you.

While she was putting her coat on I could see that uncle no. 1 was finding a veritable treasure trove in his new duranty.

'Bye, fellahs.

They sprang out of bed and made a bit of a race of it, but I got us out first and locked the door. Then I heard them slipping the bolt home.

Figure that one.

Oh! she said, as we stepped into the elevator.

And I didn't blame her. What that degenerate little Indian hadn't thought of . . . Ugh!

The rain had stopped and as we walked along she told me her mother had been the first woman ever to be elected to the Senate north of the Rockies. I said I had a friend once like that and she slipped her hand in my pocket and said why do you carry a gun? Pack a rod, you mean? All right, pack a rod, then. How'd your mother vote on the Old Age Pension? Why the rod? All right, sister, just between the two of us I don't much care. You don't much care what? How she voted.

We got to a barn and there was a farmer moving around inside with a lantern. After watching for a minute, the girl started to cry and I led her on. Why'd he have to do that? I guess it was sick, I said.

Rain again. I dug a hole in a haystack and we crawled in and curled up against the night.

Next morning I managed to get out without waking her. She had 87 dollars and some change in her bag.

I bought a ticket on the river boat and rode all that day and part of the next night. As a matter of fact, it was almost four a.m. when I got there. About the same crowd at the bar—only one new, a kid sixteen or so

PATCHEN

sitting by himself facing the door. He had a yellow puppy on his lap and was busy feeding it chocolate cookies—but not too busy to miss a word the blonde said as she came sailing out of the phone booth to greet me.

I said take it easy dish you're mussing my best suit and who's the pup's pal in the corner?

We had a beer and she told me about it.

Hanging around, huh?

Yes. Tell me—

No apparent business, huh?

None at all that we—

Get him out of here.

Ah, come on now. He's not—

I got down off the stool and walked over to his table and said all right buddy it's long past your bedtime.

He put the little dog up on the table and reached under his coat and took out a snub-nosed .32.

Roscoe's not a bit sleepy, he said.

You're a nice looking lad, I told him, and I hate to do this.

Another time I remember the same sort of thing, only this other fellow had a knife. We were all sitting around in our tents just waiting—God knows for what. I'd spent the whole damn day counting bed sheets. That night a few of us got to talking— My life's been pretty punk so far, one of them said.

How come?

While he was telling us how come, we all noticed that a sort of light was coming through the walls of the tent. We rushed out and the whole sky was full of this strange light. And there were people moving around in the light.

One of the people in the light reached down and touched my hand. I felt—I don't know—I walked up to where the light was.

There was a throne.

On the throne sat a beautiful man.

In back of the throne there were thousands of beings—I remember I kept saying the eraser won't work—over and over—THEN . . .

And I didn't feel ashamed anymore.

That will give you an idea. The main thing is to get it straight. If there is a flow, it must be coming from somewhere. And it must be headed somewhere.

Like red flowers.

In the woods, a fellow told me, he came upon a lion in a block of ice. And as he looked at the lion its eyes opened and seemed to be pleading

with him. So he split the block open with his fists. And when he'd done this—the lion fell to work and killed him. I saw the reddened heap of cloth and bones myself.

A little ATTENTION, *please!*

I didn't take that 87 bucks—and I never packed a rod in my life. (What would mother say!) I was raised by an old fellow who wrote treatises for medical journals. No, not a doc.—a hack. Red woollen shirts and drawers the year round. Lived out of cans. Bologna and baked beans sort of thing.

On the Uses of Delirium Tremens—

Hemorrhoids: And What We May Conclude From Them—

The Probable Effects of Aphonia on Our National Life—

My old foster would work maybe three months on one of these articles, getting anywhere from ten to seventy-five bucks—and, what was even more important, all the symptoms of the disease he was working on. Oh, he put everything he had into it all right. Really never a dull moment—the time, for instance, he was boning up on venereal diseases . . . and that neat young school marm raised a howl he'd given her syph.—him the cleanest living old boy you'd find in a day's march! Take Wednesday out of the week and see what you've got; though I will admit he made a mistake in taking on a commission to do a series on various mental disorders. Heard not long ago that he had stabbed an attendant—with the breastbone of a rat he'd let get all dried out and hard.

I hate to break the news those cookies you've been feeding your mutt contained enough arsenic to poison a city.

Yep, it worked. He took his eyes off me and put them on the dog. A second later the dog had been a bear he couldn't have seen it. These kids—they listen to talk.

I picked the .32 up and handed it to a cop. Here, Mac, check that for prints.

When the blonde phoned down for ice an hour later they told her the pup had convulsions and died. We never know when the truth is going to overtake us.

The mirror gave the blonde a slash of black lightning right down the middle of her puss. Two brown eyes and no nose combing out her long golden hair. A big yellow oyster kisser. Any way you look at it, two dollars is a lot of money. A smear of people in red coats chasing a fox on the wall. Three paper clips and some petals from a yellow rose in a glass on the dresser. Why don't you ever wash your slip? I asked her, making a drink and leaning back to get comfortable.

Somebody knocked on the door. I opened it and three men pushed in. Right away I could see this meant something bad to the blonde. You said you'd give me a little more time—

PATCHEN

The red coats pounding right at me . . . the walls starting to flex their white hands . . . All they'd had to do was come in while we were talking downstairs and mickey the bottle up real nice.

I came to under the roost in a coop of extremely well-fed chickens. Morn-ing was yawning away up in the branches of a grand-daddie spruce by the time I got to a lunchwagon. The coffee had been on the boil all night. I almost perferred the other taste. A truck driver asked me for a match and how was every little thing. I gave him a match and said pretty good.

Without wings such a big damn bastard he should wave a wand and fly— And how's the fag-end of things coming? I queried him.

He got it and didn't like it. A little mild flirtation first thing in the morning, eh?

Why don't you sweep the rubbish out now and then? I said to the counter-boy as I walked out. But that type of lad isn't vitally concerned with the fitness of things, as you might put it; because—and here we may be treading on a few toes—his life has no foundation in reality. Back to that later. Another word, though: They told me you couldn't believe. I said you could. I said a person could believe if he got to know his own capacity for belief—not things to believe in, hell no, but how much of the throne he could glimpse in himself, and how willing he was to let his brothers (how-ever rotten and evil) sit on that throne. It's a long way to the morning, but there's no law against talking in the dark. Ghosts, damnit! Let it run. The devil knows what to do with his furry prick. What a skruging the old world got in that direction, eh? Purity is the thing we want. Purity is the only thing can stop the bleeding now.

Ever thought what you'd do if suddenly there wasn't any point anymore in sucking around all the time? If suddenly your cell doors popped open and—the sun! a *woman!* a *man!* to feel it know it oh goddam wouldn't that be

a "pretty"—

Well frankly—I'm on your side if you're on mine . . . count on that, will you please.

LONG LIVE HUMAN BEINGS!—

But the tent. That tent covered twenty-two sq. miles. Painted silk, all fine, 12,863 ft. high, a tiny puddle of dog-vomit just as you went in, yet Peasant Designs, and I felt good, clean socks, thinking of my once-wife, sweet, funny it didn't work out, so twelve

serious-faced young men

at a table

and at the head of the table

another

young man.

PATCHEN

And it's coming in on me

SEND IN YOUR FIRST TEAM, GOD!

It's too big. It's too hurting to look right at. All men who ever lived—

This blood-fed geezookus. But enough idle chatter. It was a dreary day. The trees were eating each other in the near-by forest. The first notion I had that anything was wrong was when I tried to start my car in the parking lot. Probably five hundred other cars there. All empty but mine. I threw in the clutch, I jammed down the gasfeed

and my car didn't stir an inch

but I'll be goddamned if all the other cars didn't clash into action and go sailing merrily off down the street.

Now that sort of thing can get a person into trouble—particularly when you consider that my driver's license had expired a good two months before—but providence had his eye out that day, and . . . anyway, here's what effected a distraction:

An old granary right in the center of town started to burn. All right, that doesn't sound like much—but two thousand people were crammed in there—roasting away

WAAAAAAAAAAAA

I presume you know how they'd scream!

I took a cigarette out and lit it. I looked up at the sky. It was about as vacant and empty as ever. A girl with her nose all eaten away put her hand on my arm and said do you want to see something funny?

That I do, Miss—that I do. She led me off to one side and said take a gander into yon tree. We'll skip the patter—

The tree was full of angels.

I could tell you a lot more about that if I wanted to.

But the flow—watch this a minute:

While ago my doll came in the kitchen and said, I'm going over to B—'s for an hour or so.

I turned the eggs.

Aren't you going to kiss me?

Some other time.

What have I done now?

Nothing. Why?

Oh, you give me a pain.

Thanks.

She threw her arms up around my neck. What's the matter with us?

Is something the matter?

She took her arms down. You are a cold fish.

Thanks. I put the eggs on a plate and sat down.

Don't you care where I'm going?

Huh—what's wrong you're dropping over to B—'s?

You know I'm not.

Yeah. That's right. I know you're not. I got some yolk on my chin.

She sat down in the other place and started to cry. It's not because I want him, she said.

No, of course not.

It's just that . . . that—

Sure. I poured coffee into my saucer and stirred it with my knife. A bit of white floated forth like a drunken boat. It's just that you're lonely and scared. I know all about it.

She really made cry a word to remember. Listen, duck, I said, in another seven months it'll be Christmas—just think of it! A reward for everybody, and everybody his own reward. There are a lot of unhappy people in the world, but the grass was never greener, the sky was never—

Oh, shut up!

A large black bear came in and started to gather up the dishes.

I was late getting to the banquet. All the places around him were taken. As I started down looking for a seat I noticed that the table was set on a sort of hill, and the farther I went the less I could see of him. Finally all I could see was the top of his head. And still no seat. If you want the truth, I walked right on down the hell out of there.

Dark in the woods. Late of the year and day. I'd left my hat somewhere and the only book I had with me probably wouldn't have brought thirty cents. The four of them were sitting on a bed of moss at the foot of a tree. What gives, boys?

Well—they were lost. One of them got up and came over to stand right in front of me. I once ate a man, he said.

Do tell.

Yes. And he told me. Seems he and some pals were using an old lumber-camp as the site of a wild week-end. About thirty girls for ten men sort of thing.

—In the middle of his story one of his friends suddenly pointed a .45 at me and pulled the trigger. While they were bandaging my arm, an old fellow walked up and asked if anybody there would like to try a new way of living.

Three days we let go by. I'm down at the river picking bananas from some trees and trying to believe my good fortune. The people I caved with had about four good inches of hair between them and the elements. All, that is, except the females—of which I had drawn two.

On this fourth day, then, the young one and I are doing a bit of banana

sampling down at the riverside. Hair? She was as hairless as an icicle—except her golden head and where you'd look for a little in another place.

Had enough banana?

Her laugh gave me change for a ten. I put my hand back and she cuddled closer. I'm glad you don't know any English, I said; otherwise I wouldn't tell you that I trust actions even less than ideas; otherwise I wouldn't tell you that there isn't a single thing I really—Hello! You want your banana too, eh? Sort of an ugly old bit—her two tearing teeth coming down below her chin—sneaking around on her horny feet!

Me no like-um mans-um allatime be by-um she-ums.

Sez you-ums. But I didn't want any unnecessary discord, so I gave her a banana and the three of us went back.

A lot of excitement. Old Chief had tracked something right up into the middle of a cloud.

What kind of a something? Old Chief scratched his heavy pelt. By signs he made me know that it had fire on its face and down its back.

I think I'll have a look myself. No!—I prefer to go alone.

There was a sort of orchard inside the cloud. As the trees walked about I saw that one side of them was white, while the other was red. Also, tiny little persons swung from branch to branch in golden caps and their little black bottoms showing so that I couldn't help calling to them—but they either didn't hear or they didn't want to hear me.

And in the middle of everything a giant woman lay on a pile of what looked to be leaves—but were, in reality, kittens, brown, blue and purple. She was about seventy feet long, with tiny wrists and ankles. But are they kittens?

What's that you're lying on?

Murders.

I bent to look closer. They were indeed murders.

Where did he go?

Where did who go?

Old Chief said he tracked him in here somewhere.

Old Chief?

Then I saw a man walking down through the trees.

All the little persons scampered into a box and the trees started to pretend they'd been waiting for the mail.

The giant woman put me in her mouth and swallowed. I seemed to be standing at the counter in a drugstore

and there were twelve men at the counter drinking coffee.

Make that thirteen coffees, I said.

The man turned around very slowly. He smiled at me and I laid my book on the counter.

PATCHEN

Strangest tasting coffee I ever had—

What's the book? he asked.

You mean this book?

Yes, I do mean this book.

Oh—it's nothing much.

What's it about?

Oh—different things. A bit of this, a bit of that.

Will it make men better?

I doubt if it's worth thirty cents.

I'd spilled a little on my chin and in the mirror it looked like a careless shave.

Say, this isn't coffee!

The man smiled at me again. Look over there, he said.

I saw a liner all lights ablaze and people screaming
black water

raging and a girl tugged at my arm

and I took my lifebelt off and put it around her. Odd thing about this
we were the only ones to get to shore alive. So you see

(I told her)

There must be plan back of it after all

and she agreed with me

though she didn't feel easy a long time

her mother wondering

and no letters getting through.

But it worked out all right. We did manage to scale the mountain on
the ordained day—the day he was slated to speak, that is. She pushed the
hair back out of her eyes in the bluster and the wonder of it sweet damn
little goats muzzling his feet ta ta ta ta tee do and she is rather beautiful
honey honey honey

huh! a clean slip

and I'll bet you there were ten thousand people with yellow skins there
possibly three thousand with black—I'll check that later

and I'll bet the browns made it fifty in all

counting us, fifty thousand and three since she was already in a "family
way"—

This is what he said:

There is a shabby crying in the nations.

Lanes grow hands to strangle the unwary.

And if this enflamed adventure—

With all precincts reporting, a voice whispered in my good ear, Delaware
is ahead by a comfortable margin.

Ahead of what?

Wyoming gave a good account of herself—as a matter of fact, it was nip and tuck up until two hours and forty-six minutes ago. Pennsylvania was the big disappointment—at least to me.

Uh-huh.

Yes sir, Delawareans are the most proficient breakers of wind in this nation, all right, all right.

His friend lowered his briefcase onto a tebadrun rock. He was in the neighborhood of fifty thousand but his face was unlined and his ring showed tantalizingly through his glove.

To such an argument, or wisewordment, by appointment, he remarked, I can only obscure. When asked about none, the implication in a political sense, at least, was neither.

Was neither what? I asked, straightening my tie.

Over-elaboration of strategy simply doesn't explain this world. Even the peril on the Left, he went on, taking a charming figureen out of his short-slip, will not remedy the future, unless—and he winked; first right, then left—unless the State is willing to embrace it too.

Embrace what? I asked, knowing full well that what justice there was wouldn't put much bread in the mouths of priests' babies.

Wherefore, the psalter, having lost its savior, a tomb or, newly contrived, invisible ambition's stable, the levelling steeds defend these sick monuments. And conscience dictator's fool is.

Pardon my breaking in, his friend broke in, but I could wish that—

It is nonsense to talk of prodigies on the plain of commonsense. However skillfully the hedge rows, old debbil sea will drive him back. Power on every side; and on the side of power, everyone—we benefit in bloody rites even when we are most wrong. Be affable to authority; ruthless with the vanquished.

Take your dirty hand offen that, the figureen said.

The heart of the world is far away, I two-centsd.

What is gay and animated on God's forehead—and indeed—oh, *they*, the poor here, are miraculously endowed with poverty. Be chary of loud-fingered words—that should begin at home. And have faith or lots of money.

But how will you put your plan in operation?

By *Song*.

And its probable effect?

If important things distract you, set up an agency to collect on poetic licenses.

You are imperturbable, sagacious and I wish you would stop squirming. Nobility breeds—

Well, stop pawing me then.

—Contempt. Never ask the good man to explain evil; or bidding truth

PATCHEN

slay, look for salvation in the foul kens of slaughter. When the messenger does come, don't stop to goose the parlor maid.

I'd run a little way, then stop to shake the snow out of my shoetops. It was an odd sensation

looking back down that watching white stretch
where all the whiteness was open a watching snarling
tree-lashes

an openness almost fiery it was that darn cold
and there they

in their black neat suits strongly cut

I mean it had been planned that way

across the front and skinned IN GLASS sort of

so at any rate when I let them get near I could see their stomachs working.
Which is curious, democracy or no democracy. Why are you hunting me?
Fool question since I could see a few poor lads—grinning vacant heads
bobbling against the stained glass.

And we—the red pool in the white wood.

The whole leaning weight of being alive.

And the nuisance of being an animal.

He had a blue eye on the right side of his head. On the left side he had another eye. It was blue too. Sticking out of the middle of his face was a nose, and below it was a mouth. Inside his mouth he had twenty-seven teeth. Twenty-one of these were his own, six were not—or false, as we've come to know them. His neck was set on two shoulders, one on either side—standard equipment in this country. Below his left shoulder, on his left side, that is, dangled his left arm; below his right shoulder, directly opposite, but on his right side, should have dangled another arm—his right, so to speak—only now he was jerking away with it—

Hurrah! Hurrah! I'm going off! he cried.

My companion and I passed him without a glance, since we couldn't help staring. I should think he could find a more appropriate place to do that, my companion, a small man in a duck hunter's uniform, said.

What's down there? I asked, pointing in the direction of the horizon.

The wharf. Why?

Woof. Acquainted down there?

Where?

Oh, I don't know—pick any place you like.

You mean down there at the wharf?

Woof.

Well, I know one classy little numbah.

Among her acquaintances does she numbah a friend, now?

But my sidekick, looking wondrously keen in his foul-hunting garb, was gazing back up the street through which we had so lately walked. Yeah, he declared, fondling the word as he did all words having four letters, that little prick finally went off.

And even as he spoke, the antiquated aircraft zirred over our heads.

Damn! a very sour-looking old party remarked, shaking her fist up at the old eggcrate. Right splunk on my new hat!

You're lucky it was fresh, my hippunt advised her, moving to help her wipe it off.

Keep your hands off me, you . . . you poolhall sheik.

Ta da da da da, I volunteered, getting some nice buttock-swing into it.

Why do you have to butt in? she demanded, experiencing a slight twinge in the side which had been giving her no end of trouble since 'way last Spring at Mabel's Bundles for Mississippi affair.

Buttock in, I said with a chuckle that almost broke my fortitude of an intestinal nature, because on her the advice was well taken.

Let's get on down to that wharfhous, my companion said.

Oh! she cried. Maskerading as a duck hunter!—why, I'll bet you're one of those procurors.

A pimp'll stain the chin of decency every time, I said, turning to watch a giant fellow with a black beard trying to jump out of the way of a horse which had to go.

So I didn't bag any ducks—what does that prove! my friend retorted heatedly. I had a duck, you could have both of them.

What do you mean, both of them? she just couldn't help asking.

The goose too!—And he proved half his point.

Well, when the excitement was over—and if you don't think there was excitement when the big lad with the beard got jostled in under the horse!—I said to my companion, Reminds me of some fellows I heard about on the desert who couldn't make water for fifteen days.

Sad seeing a grown man crying right out in public like that, he agreed, pulling me back out of the path of a runaway baby carriage.

The first house we tried on the wharf was torn down. A man who would be sixty-two come next August was frying cabbage in a ten-inch skillet right where the piano used to sit.

Do they think they can bring it around? my companion asked an old maid with a long chin whisker.

It? There were three in that buggy—two girls and one of the other kind, she said, wagging her brush gravely.

Well, do they think they can bring the triplets around, Miss Fuller?

They're not triplets—only the two sisters were related. But heavens! Who ever told you my name was Fuller?

Is it?

Why, yes—it is.

B-l-l-l-l-l!! my companion said, making a face like a critic.

I noticed that all the tires on the perambulator were of good, fresh, new, live rubber—and I also noticed a brewer's wagon pulling in at the curb right behind Miss Fuller who was telling one of the policemen all about that dreadful Maggie Sharp— Why, do you know last Saturday night I saw her going—

The cop got out of the way.

It had grown colder and the brown, squigly tugs on the river looked like coughdrops which the gray mouth of the sky was sucking peviously up out of sight. The shabby houses, their eaves beginning to drip an idiot's sweat down into the street, seemed like quiet old men staring into the drawn revolvers of their sons. My companion, his wooden leg caught in a subway grating, was emptying his rifle into a gay throng of late afternoon shoppers. Two tow-heads were scuttling in and out of a row of garbage cans on the corner, miniature flame-throwers held confidently in their chubby little fists.

I went into a lunch wagon and ordered a hamburger on white roll. When Tony brought my order I took off the top part of the roll and laid it on the side of the plate. I smeared an eighth of an inch of mustard on one-half of the hamburger, then covered the other half with ketchup. I hiked up my sleeves and haunched forward on the stool. In doing this I twisted my shorts. I put salt on the hamburger and pulled a napkin out of the napkin dispenser; then I pulled my belly in and slid my hand down inside my shorts and made the adjustment.

Why don't you left it alone for a while? Tony asked, cutting his fingernails into a caldron of spaghetti soup.

I chose to think Tony was a lump on the wall. It could have made better hamburgers, at that. But after a few minutes and the night coming down and the whole damn sadness and wonder of it I said,

Tony, what do you think the score is?

He put the greasy hair and the moles with the hands under them on the counter and sucked a piece of ravioli out of his wisdom tooth. You ask me it stinks, he said.

All right, draw one, I said. Medium.

I filled a spoon twice with sugar, each time tipping it at a sharp angle over the cup. You should have had that tom altered, I said.

Tom who? Tony said.

The one who sleeps on top of the coffee urn, I told him. How much?
Fifteen.

I put a quarter on the counter.

He rang it up and slapped two nickels down.

Oh, yeah—give me a pack of Camels.

He slid the door back and reached in and took out a pack of Luckies.

Camels—that was Camels I wanted.

Huh-uh.

Well good God you got two big stacks right there in the case.

You don't want Cherstefeds?

Oh—all right.

He plunked the Luckies down and slid the door shut.

These aren't Cherstefeds.

You want or don't?

I put another quarter down and he scooped it up with the two nickels.

Take it out of the quarter.

He put the two nickels in one trough and the quarter in another; then he dug up a dime, a nickel and three pennies and banged them down on the counter.

One other thing, Tony, I said.—Matches.

No matches.

I picked all of the change up except a penny.

Tony took a book of matches out of his shirt pocket and held it out.

I thought for a minute there you were going to give me the shirt, I said, taking the book out and using one of its two matches to light a cigarette.

The street, its blood and guts of traffic and people snarling this way and that, looked as though a good spew might do it good. I slouched in the doorway of a pawnshop and thought, Well—here I am, and there they are.

I'll never live another life.

A taxi driver got out and came round and said, Keep looking at me. Give me a match.

I gave him the match. What's up?

Fellah in my cab, see, tells me to stop by the cornah. 'Nother fellah come up to this first fellah and says he's down in that dogwagon middle the block. Then I pull up here, see, an' I'm watchin'. When you come out, I know it's you, see, they're after. They're right across the street now. Ask me some direction. How you get somewhere, see.

Say, thanks—but what the hell . . . that direction business . . . they can't hear us across the street there.

Yeah, yeah, I know—but make it real-like. They should smell something, you're a dead pigeon. The fellah with the shiny black tie's a junkie, see—doped to the gills.

PATCHEN

All right. How do you get to Le Vargne and Temple?

You mean the cornah of LeVargne and Temple?

That's it.

IRT or BMT?

You tell me.

Near the river?

All right.

East?

Depends on which river you mean.

I mean, what river?

Let's see . . . the Harlem river. How's that?

You wanta go LeVargne and Temple. On the cornah, right?

Right.

Funny thing.

What is?

I been cabbin' almost twenty years now, see.

So?

I never heard of no LeVargne and Temple.

I never did either until six years ago.

You sure that's Manhattan?

Look, Mac, we can't keep this direction stuff up all night. You're a sweet boy to want to help me out, but a funny thing—I don't see anybody with a shiny black tie across the street. In fact, I don't see anybody standing across the street except a policeman who's watching over to get your reaction when you see the ticket—or, then again, let's look at it another way: Maybe that isn't a traffic ticket at all.

What are you talking about? He took the little square of paper I'd taken off the steering wheel and shoved it into his pocket.

Don't you want to know if the prints check?

I don't get you, Jack.

That's right. You don't get me. Stalling around with that crap about finding some place— All I wonder is how that beetle-brow at the hamburg joint got word to you—Mr. C. F. Lemson, Plain Clothes Division #10, Shield #5076943Y!

Oh! he exclaimed, drawing back as though with shock and consternation.

I knew there was something funny when you didn't throw that match book away, I said, staring into his fierce, narrow-set eyes with their lashes which were like so many little cell bars giving him a very ordinary human look.

But how! How!

Because when I gave you that book there was only one match left in it—in the back row, four in from the right side—and you lighted that

three-for-seven-cent cigar with that match, I said, giving anything for sight of a brewer's horse clumping in beside him at the curb.

I paid two-bits for this cigar, he said with as much dignity as he could command—which wasn't much.

Now, one other thing and I'll let you go. Think back six years ago, Busy Lemson.

I see . . . I see a classy babe with red hair in Podubaverst—

Try Omaha.

I didn't get much there.

You got me.

Huh?

March 7—try that. Remember the fellow you nabbed with the bean shooter across from the Union Club?

Sure, but— Hell that crumbbun was two good feet taller than you, and besides he had sorta bluish hair.

Cheap dye. I wanted purple, I said, taking off my left shoe and diving up and down a few steps.

Stilts he wears! he exclaimed, backing into a small boy who was lapping a huge lollipop.

I hope you're not ticklish, I said, leaning on his shoulder to get my shoe on. Now! am I the same crumbbun or not?

You're the same crumbbun all right, he said, trying to fend off the little street waif. Get away, I tell you! Go find a nice quiet kindergarden to disrupt.

And where is the Union Club in Omaha? I asked.

On the corner of LeVargne and Temple, we chanted together.

At that moment a Rolls Royce slid in at the curb and a chauffeur got out and helped a heavy-set old institution alight and the pair of them made for the small fry. Algernon, what are you weeping for? the old institution inquired solicitously.

The little boy buried his face in Busy Lemson's leg. This stupid big son-ofabitch has my lollipop stuck to his can, he said through his sharp little teeth.

How many times has mama cautioned you against slang, Algernon? That's cheap, the institution said. This gentleman has your lollipop affixed to his arse.

I walked up on the porch of a vine-covered house and knocked. The door was immediately opened by a young woman. She was dressed in the clothes she had come into the world in and her hands were cupped lovingly over two pretty little melons.

Make yourself at home while I put something on, she said.

Thanks, I will, I said, taking a knife from the sideboard and cutting one of the melons in two. While I ate one of the halves I looked around me; while I ate the other half I looked around a man who had crawled out from under the sofa with a harenet gripped firmly in his teeth—to his left there was a terra cotta statue representing virtue threatened in the persons of two rather wall-eyed-looking creatures who were selling it dearly to what appeared to be a small cow with spavins but was probably intended as an unloved mastiff or wild boar since the almost-touching figures stood on a dusty base upon whose tarnished plaque could still be discerned the words *Barbery Coast Idle*; and to his right there was a row of kitchen chairs stretching all the way out to the battered pair of boots on the top step of the cellarway, three fat dictionaries piled one on top of the other on the first chair—making the engine. The man put the rabbit into a horseshoe box which he carried for just that purpose. I find them everywhere, he said with a lisp, taking a medicine-dropper out of the violin-case which his assistant handed him.

Do you feed it with that? I heard myself asking him, because I listened when I said it.

Breed, he said.

I am, I told him, taking another deep one.

The artificial type insemination, the assistant said, taking a bowl of cream away from the orange cat and drinking it—the cream.

Oh, I thought he was lisping, I shouted, hoping the neighbors would be frightened half out of their wits.

I was, the man declared, using the dropper on the rabbit—I heard every word you said.

Ah, hell, I never have any fun, the rabbit said, hardly making herself heard above the toot-tooing of the dictionaries in their shrill Moroccan accents.

The man took a handful of loose cigarettes out of his pocket. Let me have your silver cigarette case and I'll put these Chesterfields in it, he said.

Oh, no you don't, I said. You don't get my prints so easy this trip, Mr. C. F. Lem—

I know, I know, he said, slipping his face off with a gesture of disgust. But what put you wise this time?

I turned the face over idly with my foot, waiting for the assistant to get the gesture of disgust settled in the case with the machinegun; then I said, That was simple, Clem, old boy—the Chesterfields did it.

He turned them over in his gloved hand, his ring pressing up like a cruel noose amongst the rigid corpses of the white little dolls in their

pristine dresses which fitted over their tobaccoedness like so many adjectives seeking a sentence to nibble the heart out of.

Yes, I said, cleverly knitting the dialogue together—I knew that you were trying to disguise your true identity from me *when you didn't pronounce it as would be normal for you to pronounce it*. Say Chesterfield! I barked at him, sending the orange cat up the lamp-standard.

Cherstefed, he said quarterheartedly.

I took the raccoon cap off the assistant. And as for you, I said, those big feet of yours have got policeman written all over them.

Chagrinedly he settled the cap back over his purplish hair, which was cut in the form of a star and had his shield number tattooed on the bump left by brainfever the day it tore out to enroll itself for unemployment insurance. I tell the missus somebody'll notice them, he said.

Notice them! Why you look like two billboards walking around looking for a little lot to settle on, I said, trying to keep my voice down—for I was crawling along the ceiling after the cat.

A little lot of what?

A little lot of s and three other letters, I said, having a rose tear out of the wallpaper under my clutching fingers. And when you do find that sandlot, I hope you bump into Algernon eating a big prickly pear.

If it's only sand you meant, why the s and three other letters business? Lemson asked.

A habit of mine, I explained.

Do you think there's any real hope for the world? he persisted.

I do, I said, dropping the kitten down onto the studio couch. Sometimes I feel so good just being alive that I want to kiss the first person I meet.

The young woman chose that moment to walk in. Her mouth tasted of April flowers and Kolynos. Lemson and the cop started out. Don't forget Tony, I called after them.

How'd you know! the rabbit exclaimed, slipping its face off with a hairy hand and climbing out of the basket.

I knew no self-respecting rabbit'd have ravioli on its breath, I said, picking the two faces up and tossing them out of the window. Somebody's wives are in for a little surprise, I continued, as the masks settled on two passers-by.

Ah, go f and three other letters yourself, Lemson said, leading the three of them out.

But I can't fool myself all the time, I declared, quickly guessing what he meant.

Why did you say leading three out? the young lady asked. I only saw three all told.

That's all you were meant to see, I told her—and it's lucky for your sanity that you couldn't see the other one.

Then, as the kitten gave a startled little yelp, I turned her over on the studio couch and spread her legs wide. Her belly felt warm and inviting under my fingers. I found a tiny clump of silky hair and tugged gently. The girl came over to stand beside me. How'd Hester get ink all over her?

Who Hester? I asked, letting the cat up.

Why, the kitten, stupid, she said, lifting it into her arms and rubbing it over with a handkerchief.

As I put my hat on I noticed a red stain creeping down the window. Thanks for the melon, I said.

What's the matter? Why go now? I figured we'd have a nice supper and you might want to stay here tonight, she said.

I've been called stupid too many times for one day, I said, opening the front door.

Oh, don't act like a bad-natured child! Sit down while I put the chops on. What kind of chops?

Lamb chops.

Any broccoli?

No-o—but I think there's a couple cans of spinach.

I don't like iodine on my food.

Well, how would it be I make some shoestring potatoes?

Nice.

All right. I'll put my apron on.

You're sure, no broccoli?

I'm positive. Ed doesn't like it.

Ed who?

My husband.

Where's he?

I don't know.

You don't know?

Yes— She started to cry— He just goes off.

You're getting your nose red. Where's he go?

Drinking.

How long's he been off this trip?

Almost a week.

What's par?

I don't know what you mean.

What's about how long he usually stays on these trips of his?

Maybe three—four.

Weeks?

Yes.

And you sorta have men stay over to break the monotony like?

No! No! I never did this before.

We had all better get down to cases soon or it'll sure as hell be too bad.

I don't know what you mean.

Skip it. And I suddenly shouted, Hey, Ed!

What?—Quick as a flash from the back of the house.

But . . . but how did you know? the young woman demanded, cutting the crying off short.

The shoes at the head of the cellar steps, I explained, patting her cheek and peeking down her bodice.

But you didn't go out there.

That's right. I didn't go out there.

Then how could you tell that Ed was home just because of some shoes on the cellar steps?

Because I could smell them, I said. And a cold shoe never smelled like that. Ed just had to be around somewhere near because those were what I call the five-minute shoe.

Five-minute shoe?

Yeah—ten at the outside. Somebody had had those shoes on his feet within that time. I opened the door and stepped out on the porch. Then I opened it again and stepped back into the room.

An old woman looked up from her knitting and said, What do you mean breaking in here like this, young man?

Excuse me kindly, lady, I said, and stepped back out on the porch.

I'd never seen that room before.

A star was sitting up in the sky. Somehow it took all the breath out of me—that star did. I sat down on the topstep and thought all right you sit up there and I sit down here but—

Here's your supper.

It was Ed with a big plate of steaming food on a rusted tin tray. I said, What the hell!

He said, What do you mean, what the hell? Eat these chops before they get cold.

An old lady, I said— You got an old lady living with you?

He put the tray on my knee. Here—you like more salt? some picilli?

An old lady knitting a sweater like?

No! Christamighty, no! Eat them goddam chops or I'll stuff them down your throat! Ed said emphatically, beating my chest with his clenched fist.

I just wondered, I said, starting to eat. It was a lovely sproth of a meal. The broccoli, I discovered, went surprisingly well with lamb chops. Sighing gratefully, I took a long gulp of coffee— Poor Ed! And him in a new shirt with a smart black silk bowtie.

PATCHEN

A voice—a veritable sproth of a voice, had that Ed. There's nothing like a bit of scalding coffee on a man's chest to get the phlegm up out of his lungs. Not that I thought the brew was poisoned—oh, not for a wee moment—IT WAS JUST THE WORST GODDAM COFFEE I HAD EVER TASTED IN MY LIFE!

THE FORMULAE: THE ROSE

GEORGE LEITE

I

Its wizard form, metallic mystic harsh
And strong machine breed love. Though
Glint and flame are always here, now,
This age is of machine, the poet eye
Seeks channels worn unreal, bridges
To cross time-levelled streams. Gong
Tormented men, whose vision, trapped,
Refuse the present metallic day of lions.
Feet on other side of moon
Are not less real, weighed leaded,
Carried by machines, mystics in motion.
Wings fall, somewhere there is sound
Of cathedral falling, error changes,
Does not fall, heretics abound;
Broomsticks of their wars are seen
From every window, they abound, fly,
And poet eye rejects, but fails the Rose,
Held clean as slide—cross-
Section of the vein.

Poet eye can run terrified doe, quail, hunted
Bird, and find refuge,
The cow-soft tongue of valleys, shepherd, flock
And discontent. For that mechanic form resound
Against brain's xylophone, makes music.

The Rose is real though bombed in coven.
Whirr in tumultuous air the sound of wings,
Their wizard form, in saint directness
Flood to air, point fingers to stars.
The poet eye shift quick or misses, then
Past is past and all is past, no tunes
Tomorrow. Wise in longing, encyclopedia
Of God's array, broken streets intervene
Between dream made real and their sleep.

2

This hour and the plague is certain
 No beggar fable this, time's spectacles
 Are broken, the shell broken,
 The minutes scattered. Kill them,
 They must be killed or perish
 In the strange attempt for life.
 No fabulous tale has more certain end,
 No phantasy a more hermetic key.
 They crawl along the minutes
 Of their pleasure, such dry the phosphorus
 From hands and yet would shine. Kill
 Them, kill them all, in their moment's
 Khaki dress they are one, and dangerous;
 For if they should live be forced
 To live, their lives would suck
 Ours dry, remember this, when chrysalis
 Measures its broken beginning.
 Decay covers the hands of clocks
 And cathedral time is only present.

3

This meditate minute do not lose,
 Nor in its flame perish, future
 Waits its meditation and machine
 Will whirl its time true. Never
 Fear discovery, that lost on dee
 The door to the chamber, Einstein
 Has not left yet, nor Lawrence
 Taking siesta beyond water, machine
 Cyclotrons its moment meditation.
 Bring U235 to focus, not lost,
 Not Rose, not rose, but moment
 Awareness, moment truth until
 Sun grow darkly into present
 And is lost if not future beckon
 And memory take cover. Recover
 Meaning, as reformation of principle,
 As tide drawing its oceans of thought
 Into future machine moment ever.

4

Some content man might answer this
 Doubt and dirge for moment's sense,
 Ring like bell through page and page
 And clear the meaning of harsh phrase.
 Phrase in motion until velocity
 Reaches liberation, which
 Is all endeavor, all pleasure now
 When stars ask questions as they round
 The dusk circle, revolve to morning.
 Hope gave this answer, not content.
 Though what comes is not, no answer comes
 That wars of present haven't always
 Questioned. O man of content,
 Beyond your minute what limit now
 To the engraved wind of morning.

5

To make in a horrified absence from believe
 These words that vault a weak house, Super
 Man in tomorrow's dress against death's rag
 Wound round our mummy frame, innocent
 The beast that nuzzles rags for food.
 Vault, word of tomorrow is, ruin doom
 Of streets is moment's need, endeavor.
 Those eyes, this eye, blind dry look
 Against tomorrow, no future in moment.
 Sorrow is our mummy dress, teeth of beast
 Have nuzzled us and closed our eyes.
 But will vault this ruined house, will
 Vault this fault of indiscretion,
 The better side of skeleton used and not
 Discarded. Best this mummy house, it is.
 That is end and toll of present, is.

6

By today is meant the present wall
 Against the future, this curtain,
 And this curtain's vain endeavor

LEITE

To pierce itself, an arras, holding
In own arms a sword cast in today's
Furnace, no heat gives, paradox
Of the mind's decay is this bliss:
This cool fire that hardens steel
Until it crack, like splitting ship
Against the reefs of its purpose.
But through today, and not through
Curtain is tomorrow's future bled
From past, apothecaries art,
Or drug store leech, no moment will
Nor ever shall endeavor it.
Moment past and present one
Sun veils the needless curtains—
The sun that needs no bellow
No sword to harden its meaning.

7

Opposable machine brain thumb
Touches ever finger,
(Need I enumerate the sciences?)
And as in that foetal time moment
Becomes itself a finger leading:
As led by squatting man in cave,
Aurignacian, (You may name the name),
A corpse painted blue or red, first
Found, the latter is my guess.
Toward mystic, Bernard, Francis,
And Machiavelli if you wish
To bring the past clear round. Now
Has its terror and its tenor
Has its strength and its moment;
Go back if you wish, I will not
Restrain or attempt to train
You into future, that is yours,
Your wish if you will, not mine
For in that direction lies
My present, and my endeavor.

8

At the moment of departure,
 House grey, the windows
 Look on future. How will
 This be solved by moment's tear?
 It moves, it moves, it
 Rolls on rubber wheels into
 Future. The present shifts
 Its gaze and becomes tomorrow.
 The heat of moment becomes
 Not present but omen, points
 Directly to a point, direct
 And stabilized by reference
 Into time not formed, moment
 Again moment, and future.

A Selection From
ORESTES RIDES AGAIN
or
LITTLE ELECTRA AND THE PULITZER PRIZE

PAUL PALMER

Author's Note: Recently re-reading Mr. Eugene O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra*, the author was struck by the everlasting power of that deathless plot concerning the tragic fate of Electra, Clymenestra, Agamemnon, Aegisthus, and Orestes. And then another thought—if the plot had so well served Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Mr. O'Neill, how well might it also have served other distinguished authors? What would the classics of American literature be today if Mr. O'Neill's contemporaries had followed his example and hewed to the Greek line? The answer soon became some renderings of the Electra legend, each in the manner of a chef d'oeuvre of Mr. O'Neill's period.

The customary, and most sincere, apologies are hereby offered to the talented writer whose name, one hopes, has not been taken in vain

—Paul Palmer

As John Dos Passos Might Have Written It—

NYE-YENN, NYE-YENN, NYE-YENN

NEWSREEL XLIV

*'Twas Christmas in the harem, the eunuchs all were there
Watching the lovely maidens comb their golden hair*

MAN BITES DOG

DRED SCOTT MAKES TWELVE CONSECUTIVE PASSES
N PRISON CELL

to the well known fact that Henry Ford, staunch friend of labor, will not allow his employees to drink beer. Mr. Ford also piloted The Peace Ship to Europe and was instrumental in imprisoning Matthew Arnold for having sold the West Point signals to Nathan Allen, the British spy

SLAYS FATHER, MOTHER, TEN CHILDREN, BECAUSE
THEY WERE UNHAPPY

PALMER

*When in strode the Sultan and looked about the walls,
Said: "What do you want for Christmas, boys?"*

J. P. MORGAN OPENS PRIVATE MUSEUM TO PUBLIC:
MING VASE SOUVENIR TO EACH VISITOR

urgently advise the careful investor to take advantage of the present golden opportunity and buy Blue Chip securities. Prices may seem high at three and four hundred but that is nothing compared to what they will be in the future

UNEMPLOYED OFFERED TEN-CENT BEDS AT
WHITE HOUSE

MISSING NEW YORK JUDGE WINS FIRST PRIZE AT
ASBURY BABY PARADE

And the eunuchs answered: "_____!"

JOE AGNEW

The years Joe was little he never heard anything about his Dad or his Mummy who were both in Leavenworth doing time, but when he was studying his homework evenings up in his little room in the attic he'd start thinking about them sometimes. He'd throw himself on the bed and lie on his back having erotic daydreams and trying to remember what Dad had been like and Bellingham and Mummy and everything before everyone had been so unhappy and he had come to Seattle to live with Aunt Mattie. There was a smell of bayrum and cigarsmoke and he was sitting in the barbershop watching Dad trim the customers; and he would climb up on Dad's back while Dad was shaving a Mr. Engberg and the back of Dad's neck was fat and red and when Dad laughed he could feel it rumble in his back, "Joey, keep your dirty feet offen Dad's white jacket," and he was on his hands and knees in the gaslight that poured down from the lamp trying to pick the grey hairs out of the brown hairs and the smell of armpits. And Mummy was saying, "Henry, don't strike the child," and they stood hissing at one another behind the partition on account of customers while he got sick feeling and rubbed against Mummy's puffy silk sleeves putting his teeth on edge and making him shudder all down his spine.

That summer he got a job as bellboy at The Greystone Hotel and Aunt Mattie told him he must keep himself pure for the lovely sweet girl he would someday marry and that anything else led only to madness and

disease. Later that summer he found that Aunt Mattie was half right anyway. But a fella he knew showed him where the Y.M.C.A. would cure you of clap for twenty-five dollars and so he was all right till the next time.

The next summer he met an old tramp down by the railroad tracks when he was on his vacation and they hopped a fast freight out of Spokane on the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul. When they got to Cleveland Joe's friend borrowed a quarter from him and lammed. Joe never saw him again. That left Joe forty-five cents and he found a chink joint where you could get hamandeggs and french fries for thirty cents and with the other fifteen cents he bought *Snappy Stories* and went out under a pine tree and read all afternoon in the sunshine. It felt fine stretching out there under the blue sky.

Next winter he rode the rods to New York and got a job pearl diving in Moneta's restaurant but the food was too rich for him and he had to quit and he slung hash at Thompson's for a whole year. He didn't go out much nights, sticking around the Y and shooting a little pool with the guys and only going after the skirts Saturday nights. He was making seven-fifty a week and saving up for an accordion.

That summer a swell show was put on down at Miner's Bowery Theater and Joe decided to take it in. He went down to the theater on Tuesday, July 4th, in the afternoon, to get a good seat for that night and forked over seventy-five cents for Row C, Seat 1.

NEWSREEL XLV

*And when I die don't bury me at all,
Just pickle my bones in alcohol.*

GOLD STAR MOTHERS VIEW DEMONSTRATION OF MODERN BOMB WARFARE

DENTIST FILLS WRONG CAVITY

whereas the Hon. Ole Hansen, staunch friend of labor, denounces the insult to Old Glory and offers his services to carry the case of the Scottsboro negroes to the Supreme Court of the United States and lynch them there

GROVER CLEVELAND BERGDOLL OPENS SPEAKEASY IN UNTER DEN LINDEN

*Bon soir, ma cherie, comment allez-vous?
Voulez-vous couchez 'vec moi ce soir?
Oui, oui, dix sous!*

PALMER

HOOVER GUARANTEES PROSPERITY UNDER
REPUBLICANS

deciding to refuse the Duchess, staunch friend of labor, admission to America on the grounds that she had committed moral turpitude some years before. The Duchess came to this country to study vice conditions, gang warfare, and political corruption

CALVIN COOLIDGE BUSTS A GUT LAUGHING

*Put them all together they spell Mother,
A word that means the world to me!*

CLIMENTINE CARROLL

Little Climentine lived in a redbrick house on Mount Vernon Place with a white stoop because it was Baltimore. The governess, Miss Hester, had horrid blue eyes, but all the negro servants had such lovely eyes. You could play in the pantry sometimes but you could never go into Yourfather's study because Yourfather was always in there getting stinko on mintjuleps. And you couldn't go in Dearmother's room because Dearmother wasn't to be disturbed when she was having a nervous breakdown. But you could walk up and down Charles Street in sunny weather and everybody in Baltimore said what more is there in life than walking up and down Charles Street. And you could read The Sunpaper and snub common people who read any other paper. But you mustn't look at your small budding breasts in the mirror because they are something to be ashamed of.

When Climentine was twelve years old she went across Mount Vernon Place to The Peabody School of Music every morning for a month until Dearfather heard about it and said no Carroll was going to be a professional musician and he went over to The Maryland Club and got plastered and sat at the window and sneered at all the people walking on Charles Street which is something that only a Carroll is allowed to do and so Climentine had to give up her music.

The next summer Climentine started making careful little drawings of some Greek vases she saw pictured in The Sunpaper and everyone said she had talent. She began to go around with people interested in art and liked men who were gentle and feminine and there were always plenty of men like that on Charles Street.

When Climentine went to New York to study art she was thirty-two. Dearmother told her to comport herself like a Carroll but she knew all about that after watching her father for thirty years. It was a great lark

getting off at the Pennsylvania Station in New York with all the people and the bustle and hurry. She was breathless as she rode down to Washington Square on top of a big green bus. Fifth Avenue was exciting even if it was not like Charles Street and The Square was really Bohemian. She went to Number 61 Washington Square where an awfully interesting New York man who had been on The Sunpaper had told her she would find real atmosphere. She rang the bell and the door was opened by the loveliest old lady, a Madame Branchard from Zurich, Switzerland, and Madame Branchard rented her a hallbedroom for ten dollars a week in advance. She was thrilled at really being Bohemian at last.

Madame Branchard's son, Emile, was an artist, too, and he promised to criticise her work. Climentine decided to celebrate her first night alone in New York and then to start work bright and early the next morning. She decided she would paint the Washington Arch the first thing only adding a figure of Robert E. Lee mounted on a horse to make it better. She asked Emile what theater a young girl like she should go to that night.

Following Emile's advice, Climentine went down to Miner's Bowery Theater and bought a ticket for the evening performance. It was the Fourth of July and the ticket was for Row C, Seat 2.

NEWSREEL XLVI

*Oh, General Whoozis won the war,
Parlez-vous!*

TITANIC COLLIDES WITH LUSITANIA IN MID-OCEAN:
ALL VANBERBILTS AND ASTORS REPORTED SAFE

INEXPERIENCED YOUNG CONGRESSMAN REFUSES
JUICY BRIBE

told the League of Nations today that Japan, staunch friend of labor, had seized one hundred and twenty-three million square miles of Chinese territory in Manchuria only in self-defense. At the suggestion of England the League postponed action on the subject indefinitely

PROHIBITION AGENTS RAID FANEUIL HALL

*Oh, General Whoozis won the war.
Parlez-vous!*

REV. DR. SMITHERS ATTRIBUTES DEPRESSION TO
RIGHTEOUS ANGER OF GOD

resenting the statement that the American Federation of Labor was the most conservative organization in America, John Greene, staunch friend of labor, pointed to the fact that the A.F.L. had opposed beer for the working man and had not called any strikes during the two times when the workers had the greatest opportunity to improve their position, during the war and during the depression, and insisted that the statement be retracted and another issued stating that the American Federation of Labor is the most conservative organization on God's green earth

USED BATHTUB DISCOVERED SOUTH OF MASON-DIXON LINE

ROCKEFELLER ACCUSED OF HANDING OUT COUNTERFEIT DIMES

*Oh, General Whoozis won the war.
Right on top of a Paris —,
Rinky-dinky parlez-vous!*

THE BAMBINO

George Herman Ruth has earned over one million dollars playing baseball

He is one of the best pitchers

An excellent first baseman

A fine rightfielder

Can play any infield position

Runs the bases swiftly and thinks on his feet faster than most

But has become Number One American Athlete chiefly because he can mace out sixty home runs in one season.

The Babe gets \$80,000 a year and eats any hot dog he can lay hold of.

Millions of Americans regard him as supreme.

He was raised in an orphan asylum in Baltimore, but not on Charles Street.

The Babe is the greatest baseball player who ever lived.

J. WARD AEGISTY

He was born in New York City on Christmas Day. Poor Mrs. Aegisty could hear Christmas carolers singing outside the hospital all through her labor pains. And when she came to a little and they brought the baby boy to her she asked the nurse in a trembling husky whisper if she thought

it would have a bad effect on the baby all that noise, prenatal influence you know. The nurse said the little boy ought to grow up very religious and probably a highchurchman being born on Christmas and went on to tell a long story of a woman who'd been frightened by having a beggar push his stick out suddenly right under her nose just before the child was born and all his life that child had got the wet end of the stick.

As a child J. Ward Aegisty was very precocious, showing marked aptitude for "taking" other people at a very early age. When two years old he sold his first teeth, which were falling out, to a one year old baby whose first teeth were slow about coming in. With the money cleared from this deal he bought Anaconda Copper purely as an investment, thereby foreshadowing the advice he was later to give the American people—purchase sound securities and hold them; or, as the popular phrase later became, "something you can put away and regret."

At the age of three, J. Ward had all the boys in the neighborhood selling papers for him and was already starting to cut in on the vice money which was very juicy in this district. During the next twenty years he was ward heeler, street car conductor, newspaper reporter (his only backward step), garbage man, real estate clerk, Episcopalian Bishop, bond salesman, and finally, publicity man. It was Aegisty who thought up the idea of having Anna Held take a bath in a tub full of Walker-Gordon milk, later starting Mrs. Hearst's Milk Fund with the overflow.

It was not until he was twenty-eight years old that he found time to go in for the finer things and try and get a little fun out of life. The next summer he decided to celebrate the Fourth of July and he bought himself a ticket for the show at Miner's Bowery Theater that night. The ticket was for Row C, Seat 3.

NEWSREEL XLVII

*Oh, Babe, how long must I wait—
Can I have it now or must I hesitate?*

JUDGE GARY DENIES DEBBS IS SWEETEST MAN
SINCE JESUS

NEW YORK CITY TREASURY DISAPPEARS

points to the fact that while Theodore Dreiser, staunch friend of labor, has been arrested for radical activities he has never been prosecuted for his long record of criminal assaults on the English language

HATCHET KILLER OF SIX SINGS PSALMS IN CELL

PALMER

*Ev'rybody's doin' it, doin' it.
Doin' what, doin' what?
Turkey trot, turkey trot!*

WHITE SOX HAVE DECIDED EDGE IN OUTFIELD

meanwhile the Passaic strikers have retained as counsel William Howard Taft, staunch friend of labor, and present Secretary of The American Civil Liberties Union. Mr. Taft will denounce legislation by injunction at 3:30 p.m. Tuesday

FRANCE APPEALS TO AMERICA TO REPAY SACRED
DEBT OF 1776

FRANCE REPUDIATES WAR DEBT TO AMERICA

*I'd walk a million miles
For one of your smiles
My mammy!*

JOE

Joe sat down in Row C, Seat 1, in Miner's Bowery Theater. There was a jane next to him who wasn't bad looking only she was pretty old. The guy in the next seat was trying to make her and the jane kept leaning over toward Joe to try and get away from the guy.

Joe said, "Is that mug botherin' you, lady?" And she said, "Yes, he is but don't start anything because a disturbance would be unseemly." Joe had never known a woman of this class before. He looked the guy over. The guy was pretty big. Joe said to the jane, "Lets pike outa here and go somewhere. I hear the show's lousy anyhow." So the jane said Oke and they pulled out. But the guy followed them.

Joe and the jane walked over to City Hall Park and Joe said, "I'm tired of bein a bum. What do you say you and me get married? I could go for you." They talked it over awhile and the jane said Oke. So they went into City Hall and got married. The jane's name was Climentine Carroll but Joe didn't mind.

When they came out the guy was waiting for them on the steps. He said, "Get married?" And Joe said, "Yeh, what's it to you?" And the guy said, "My name's J. Ward Aegisty—I'll be seein' you." And he beat it.

So Joe and Climentine went over to the Y and got Joe's stuff and then they went to Madame Branchard's in Washington Square where Climentine was staying and they showed Madame the marriage license because the

old lady was awful particular about stuff like that and she said it was pretty quick but Oke so they moved into the hallbedroom and went to bed right away and Joe was glad he had give up his rough ways.

The next year they took an apartment over on Perry Street. They got along allright because Joe was promoted to assistant night foreman at Thompsons and Climentine was making a little oughday herself drawing fashions for *The Daily News*. The first child was born there and Climentine called her Eleta but Joe couldn't figure why, so what the hell. Two years later the boy, Orrin, was born and then Climentine said that would be all. It was Oke with Joe.

When the war came Joe figured he'd better go as he was getting tired of Thompsons and there was a wop cook down there who was laying for him anyway. So Joe signed up with the Volunteers to save his country from the despotic power of Spain and Climentine knitted him some socks which he give to a guy from Wisconsin and Joe went to Cuba on the Buford. It was a war with Spain.

Joe liked the spic janes and soon learned to savvy a little of the lingo. They used to sneak out from camp nights and go down to a cafe run by a fat woman called Maria-Garcia where you could get fair beer but warm and if you had the price you could get a shot of rum that would lift the skull right off your ears. After you'd laid in a few beers the hookers didn't look so bad and you could have a hell of a time and no trouble as long as you got back to camp by dawn. Joe used to say, "This ain't a war, its a god-dam cat-house!"

Lots of the guys died of fever and clap and some even got shot. Nothing happened to Joe though and he fought right through the war when he wasn't getting plastered down at Maria-Garcia's.

NEWSREEL XLVIII

*Oh, the General got the Croix de Guerre,
Parlez-vous!*

U.S. SENATOR, DRUNK IN SALOON, VOTES DRY BY
PROXY

EVERY AMERICAN WILL OWN TWO AUTOMOBILES
BY 1933

stating that America is not yet ripe for revolution because all the fools can't be in Congress as that body is limited in number and that therefore

most of the fools must be among the unemployed and hence there is no danger in this country from an army of thirteen million starving men

PARK AVENUE DEB SEDUCES SEVEN MARRIED MEN

*Oh, the General won the Croix de Guerre,
Parlez-vous!*

U.S. MARINES CALLED "HUNS" BY NICARAGUANS

reliably reported that Herbert Bayard Swope, staunch friend of labor, is going to give his entire private fortune to the City News Service as a gesture of appreciation toward the gay reprehensible, gay indispensable boys who manufacture the news

DON'T SELL AMERICA SHORT

HYENAS IN WASHINGTON D.C. ZOO LAUGHING LOUDER THAN EVER

*Oh, the general won the Croix de Guerre,
The — of a — was never there!
Rinky-dinky parlez-vous!*

ORIGINAL BID OF TWO IN A SUIT

Ely Culbertson was born July 22, 1891, in Poyana de Verbilao, Roumania. They were playing whist in The States at the time.

But Culbertson changed all that.

It is hard enough to get the simpler principles of auction bridge through the head of an American. But Ely made them contract-conscious. They ate it up.

Before Culbertson appeared, the most complicated maneuver of American bridge tables was bidding a lily. Culbertson introduced the Forcing Bid of Two in a Suit and revolutionized American life.

Ely taught housewives who didn't know how to order a luncheon properly, to compute quick tricks and Playing Values.

Ely hypnotised lackadaisical schoolteachers with his Minimum Requirements For Opening The Bidding.

Travelling salesmen implicitly believed Culbertson when he announced that the correct Response From Weakness was Two No-Trump.

Mothers, sweethearts, daughters, sisters, aunts, great-grandmothers blithely Bid Aces For Slam.

Fathers, lovers, sons, brothers, uncles, great-grandfathers knew that a Doubleton Is One-Half Trick.

Ely Culbertson married Josephine Murphy on June 11, 1923. Miss Murphy bid a mean force in any suit.

Ely has made a hundred million people contract-conscious. They play, fight, quarrel, denounce, squabble at a game that is at least four evolutionary stages above their comprehension. But they love it.

A hundred million Americans pay Ely Culbertson thousands and thousands of dollars a year to give them a winning system and when they sit down at the bridge table they bid just as they damn please.

The disciples of The Master throng over the country into rude huts and lavish penthouses spreading The Word. But Plumbers, from Main Street to Park Avenue, are Caught Out on The Limb just the same.

Ely Culbertson is president of The Bridge World, Inc., president of The National Bridge Association, and a member of The Greek Orthodox Church.

He can play a rubber or two as a member at The Whist or Cavendish Clubs (New York), The Alamacks (London), and The Cercle d'Escrime (Paris).

He lives sumptuously at The Hotel Chatham, 33 East 48th Street, New York City.

Thousands upon thousands of dollars are paid you in annual tribute, Oh, Master, but This Great Democracy goes right on Leading Away From The King.

CLIMENTINE

Ten minutes after Joe had gone off to the war there was a ring at the door bell and Climentine answered it. In walked J. Ward Aegisty, the attractive man who had sat next to her in Miner's Bowery Theater the day she had met Joe. Climentine said, "Hello, you." And Ward said, "I said I'd be seein' you. When do we eat?"

Climentine arranged for Ward to stay in Joe's room for the duration of the war. Ward moved in and everybody was happy except Eleta, the daughter. She was sore as hell, moped around the apartment and made cracks. But Climentine and Ward didn't mind. They behaved themselves; during the daytime.

The next summer the war got over and Climentine said Ward had better pull out because Joe would be coming home any day now. But Ward said he didn't see why he should as he was perfectly comfortable and Joe could

sleep on the couch in the living room when he got back, besides it was his patriotic duty to welcome home the conquering hero. They argued about it all the time but didn't seem to get anywhere and then before they knew it Joe was home from the war all sunburned.

When Joe walked in the apartment he said to Ward, "I seen you somewhere before." And Ward said, "Sure, I was in C-3." And Joe said, "Oh, so you're the guy." And Ward said, "Yeh, I'm the guy."

So Climentine brought out a quart of rye she'd been saving and they all had a drink. They had a couple of more and then Joe said, "Do you know what I want to do first of all—what I've been longing for for months and months?" Climentine said, "I was afraid of this." And Joe said, "Well, I'll tell you. I want a hot bath." And Climentine said, "Oh, that's different." And Ward winked at her like they had a plan. So she went in the bathroom and turned on the water.

Joe and Ward had a couple of more drinks and then Joe went in the bathroom and got undressed and got in the tub. Climentine came out and had a couple of more drinks with Ward. Then Joe yelled from the bathroom for them to bring him a drink. So Ward winked at Climentine and got up and went into the bathroom with the bottle and he hit Joe right between the eyes with it and the bottle broke and the rye ran down Joe's face and got in his eyes. The blow also cracked his skull and the blood ran down into the water. Ward picked up a chair and smacked Joe with that. Joe slid down under water. Ward waited for him to come up. But he didn't. So Ward went back to the other room and Climentine got out another quart and they had a couple of drinks.

NEWSREEL XLIX

*I've been kissed by boys in khaki,
I've been kissed by boys in blue.
I've been kissed by naval aviators,
And I always thought that they would do.*

U.S. SUPREME COURT REVERSED ITSELF THREE TIMES
IN TWO DAYS

PROHIBITION AGENT QUILTS IN DISGUST

said that Jack Sharkey, staunch friend of labor, is champion of the world as the result of a fair fight and that prizefighting is the cleanest sport in America and absolutely never crooked. The audience rose as one man and enthusiastically gave the Bronx cheer

PALMER

MUSSOLINI INAUGURATES NEW FOOT RACE TO BE
CALLED "CAPORETTO MARATHON"

*I was once engaged to a lieutenant
And I thought that life would be a dream*

BISHOP CANNON ENDORSES VIRGINIA CORN WHISKEY

declaring that he merely wanted to know, the witness, a staunch friend of labor, asked why it was that the bankers, in 1928, urged THRIFT and the saving of every penny, and then, in 1932, begged the people to SPEND and stop saving. Was there conceivably, he wanted to know, anything wrong with the bankers

MRS. HOOVER REFUSES TO GREET NOTED WET AT
WHITE HOUSE

HAM FISH SEES REDS CONTROLLING INK INDUSTRY

*But the boy who filled my heart with gladness
Was a United States Marine!*

ORRIN

Orrin was born in Perry Street when Joe and Climentine had lived in the apartment for two years. He was a strong baby from the first and was always tearing things up. No one paid much attention to him except Eleta; she took an almost fanatical interest in him and practically brought him up herself.

When Joe went off to the Spanish American war and J. Ward Aegisty came to live at the apartment, Eleta thought the atmosphere unwholesome for her brother so she bundled him up one fine day and took him away on a train. Orrin remembered that journey all his life; the long black tunnel at first, then all the tenement houses where the poor people live, and finally the green fields and sweet woods where nobody lives. After riding all day and all night and changing trains twice they came to the place where they were going. It was a military school called Rolver and Eleta entered Orrin as a student and left him there. Then Eleta went back on the train. Orrin was twelve years old.

Orrin got on pretty well from the start. Soldiering came natural to him and he had a way of getting on the right side of his non-coms. He was the best crapshooter in his company and always had plenty of jack. He liked

the town janes and soon learned to savvy their wisecracking lingo. They used to sneak out from school nights and go down to a speak run by a fat woman called Mary Garsha where you could get fair homebrew beer and if you had the price you could get a shot of corn that would lift the skull right off your ears. After you'd laid in a few beers the hookers didn't look so bad and you could have a hell of a time and no trouble as long as you got back to school by dawn and no one caught you. Orrin used to say, "This ain't a military school, its a goddam cat-house!"

Then the World War started and Orrin joined an Ambulance Corps and was sent to France. They had a smooth crossing and only saw one sub but it let them alone on account of the limy destroyers that were right there. Orrin used to go up to the captain's quarters to watch him steer the zig-zag course through the minefields. Orrin always said, "This ain't a war, its a goddam wheelhouse!" Every night they got drunk on gin that the crew made down in the hold. Finally they slid into Brest and the gang went into the town to see what was what. They drank beaucoup cognac and everybody got tight. They ended up in a joint and got into a fight with some frogs. Everybody was terribly tight. In the morning Orrin was sent to Paris where it was raining. They stayed there two days and got blotto every night. Then they went to the front and got blind on Chamberlain on the way up.

Orrin got leave for Paris all the time and they would get tight at Pocardis on Chianti and dry Martinis. Soon after this they were sent to the Italian front just in time to get a ride back from Caporetto in a staff car with a couple of goodlooking nurses. Everyone was tight. The Italian girls were hot stuff and would take anybody on. They all got blotto on grappa. Orrin said, "This ain't a war, its a goddam saloon!"

When America entered the war Orrin got a job in Paris with the Red Cross taking care of Middle Western generals who were finding out about cocktails. He was plastered all the time. All the French girls were sleeping with everybody. Armistice Day came and everybody got tight. He came home on the French Line and was blotto all the way over.

Orrin went around to the apartment on Perry Street. Eleta was sitting in the parlor drinking gin. They had a couple of drinks and finished the bottle. Orrin pulled out a pint he got from a guy at the Navy Yard. They knocked that off, too. Then Eleta told him how J. Ward Aegisty and Climentine had murdered his father in the bathtub and Orrin got sore. So they had a couple of more drinks and Orrin got good and sore. Then Orrin finished the bottle and went in the bedroom and shot Aegisty in the back of the head and Climentine got up and drank herself to death. And Eleta found another quart and they knocked that off and then Orrin figured he'd better be pulling out so he breezed.

PALMER

Orrin went down to the New York Central tracks on Riverside Drive and made a westbound freight and stayed on the rods to Chicago. He worked there awhile but it got hot for him so he hit the road again. He would travel awhile and then work till he figured they were after him and then he would pull out again. Finally he gave up work and kept on the bum steady. Just moving from one place to another.

NEWSREEL XLX

*My country 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,*

TWO SING SING BACKFIELD MEN MAKE
ALL-AMERICAN TEAM

confidentially reported that in case of war with the United States, Mexico, staunch friend of labor, planned to commence offensive operations by bombing the South with green vegetables dropped from fast planes. The sudden appearance of quantities of green vegetables below the Mason-Dixon Line, it is argued, would cause countless deaths from shock

GIANT ITALIAN LINER BREAKS ANOTHER RECORD:
SINKS IN TWELVE SECONDS

*Oh, Columbia, the gem of the ocean
The home of the brave and the free*

FOREIGN VISITOR THINKS SKYLINE,
AMERICAN WOMEN, LOUSY

WHITE SLAVES GIVEN AWAY WITH TEN CENT
PURCHASES AT ALL A. AND P. STORES FOR
ONE WEEK ONLY

*Oh, say, can you see by the dawn's early light
Does the star spangled banner still wave?*

THE GREAT AMERICAN NOVEL

For the Americannovel publishedduringtheyear whichshallbestpresent thewholesomeatmosphereof Americanlife andthehigheststandardof Americanmannersandmanhood—\$1000.

busboy harveststiff hogcaller boyscout sophomores at Yale reading Pater
and Wilde writing

sexuallyundernourished middle western school teachers thirsting for
vicarious kicks writing writing

San Quentin prisoners writing dimly in cells

people waiting for the bookofthemoth to come writing

newspaperreporters riding patrol wagons reading Jean Christophe hom-
ing to village flats to write write write

wives neglecting housework getting encouraging letters from Isabelle
Patterson moulding moving novels

lumberjacks huddled near bunkhouse stoves scrawling sagas of north-
woods stumbling in search of divine fire

groceryclerks get kind words from Mencken with real signature writing
policemen retire to write life story boy what I havent seen in my forty
years on the force

correspondence school clog mails with instructions lessons we criticize
your work and market it one student sold first story for one hundred and
ten dollars pamphlet tells how why don't they write stuff themselves if they
know so much about it

sitting in quiet rosecovered southern homes remembering greycoated
grandfathers they write gracefully about gentlefolk but a young man with
flame in his heart also writes about the south and it hurts hurts hurts

flatfaced poets of the middle west slabs of an arid west heap verbs of
action onto a platter of juicy adjectives and splatter handfuls of vivid
phrases into the face of god and swing round the country like rutting
rotarians reciting their stuff to hysterical women at incredible afternoon
gatherings

drunkards in New York City drag themselves out of stifling speakeasies
and fumble at hazy typewriters to express the shattering effect of sidecars
and betweenthesheets talk all night in tobacco stenchd air and fornicate
feebly at the end of each chapter

sweetChrist where has my youth fled and all the promises

excited youngsters pour out of Harvard Yale Williams and even Prince-
ton clutching special editions of Pierre Louys plunge like halfbacks at
portable typewriters and describe the same countryclub

up at Columbia how many women should be home making beds and
cleaning their fading bodies for once sit wideeyed before exhibitionistic
professors gulping down the unities of Aristotle with the unpleasant sex-
radiations of apoplectic apologists how many men and boys up there
should be shoeclerks instead of writing writing writing

professional poets living on women's clubs space writers for trade jour-

PALMER

nals vaudeville reporters gossip column mongers creating a new language
writing writing

critics living for Monday night and the pointingeyes of Broadways gutter-
snipes writing

journalists who used to be newspapermen themselves writing writing

I'm selling to the Post now but working on something really good in my
own time writing writing

Joseph Hergesheimer wrote fourteen years before he sold anything

writing writing writing writing writing

There ought to be a law.

THE END

THREE VERSE PLAYS

HERBERT CAHOON

THREE WARS

- AVIATOR: That band of light with which
 A full moon strengthens the horizon
 Trembles with the coastal guns.
 The high offshore patrol returns
 From hours of boats and shadows.
 Bodies in the tide are dim
 When the stubborn beach grass
 Moves back from the sun.
 The fishermen have ventured
 Past the adding outer bar
 Into the margin of death
 Without a colored sail;
 Thus shall I fly beyond the dawn
 The gray dawn and the morning sea.
- FISHERMAN: If the clouds break and drop
 Afflictions by the barrel,
 If the submarine is troubled
 By a squall, is there a
 Cold ocean answer as the
 Piston fits the cylinder?
- PANTICO: Question and answer
 Are cheaper in this war
 Than any speech to come.
- CITIZEN: Birth yelling, good-natured,
 Becoming a leader Mike,
 Turn up your collar!
 Take a deep breath!
 Be not sinful for the air
 Is caught on falling steel
 And every line is power
 And death and gravity.

CAHOON

- FISHERMAN: Pre-barbarity turns the blood
That rushes into evil beauty.
War is all violence
Rolled into the life of man.
- CITIZEN: I can no longer doubt security,
Habit's a comfortable misfit for me.
When the daily battle breaks
My time comes back with a badge,
Hot apple pie and girls at home,
Something faded, nothing more—
But I can feel deeper.
- FISHERMAN: Aviator-soldier, wandering,
Taught, yet never told.
- CITIZEN: Out of the deepest feeling
Comes idealism, the wish
To rise cleanly and alone.
Untouched and longing
Until death takes him whole
An aviator flies today.
- PANTICO: Strength is not clean,
It rises alone to live
In sorrow, and spends its heart
In whirlpools of love.
Every design will not appear
Before the armistice,
But the pattern could have grown.
- CITIZEN: What of my beliefs?
- PANTICO: They have the volume
Of a velvet cabinet.
- AVIATOR: Every searchlight could not find
A cloud for Easter; some crossed
Like wedges of blue gold,
Moving like magnetized needles.
I saw them over many miles
Blazing like saints around the ship,

CAHOON

Blurred like rubbed-out chalk
Above the distant mountains.

PANTICO: The air around separate moonbeams
Is joyful in climbing aloft
Of the rays of the raid.

AVIATOR: Flaming with high nobility
Like the threaded searchlights
I shall live alone near God,
I shall live up to the past.
Skeleton riders will play
A Turkish dirge for everyone;
Locusts will follow the flight
Making an end to wheat.
Then I look back to the dawn—
Why do I want to remember it,
Be turned by the old loves
No longer living at home?
Steel wings point at the storm;
And time has left no oracles in check.

FISHERMAN: Tell from these candle birds
Shrieking before the hurricane,
Speak it aloud when you've learned it!
O mongrel enigma! Corydon!
Licorice heart! The quest
Has trickled all her youth,
No longer searched for but
Wallowed in over your head.
The scattered eagles of the sea
Sail on the wind for their lives.
Why does gray rain fall on them
And wind drive them into the North?
Get back to that mystery, soldier!
Why did it happen to you?

PANTICO: Manipulation of the past in sorrow
Shows we require civilization because
Everyone is not beautiful.

CITIZEN: What about the rest of us?

CAHOON

PANTICO: The very things of memory
 Incarnate, the great lungs
 Of satisfaction pure again.
 Gentle mother,
 Sleeping princess,
 Go into the godlike future
 With your incredible faith.

Curtain

THE MARKET

THE SPEAKER: Friends of sacrifice!
 Liberal comrades!
 Now here we have the meat
 Lying on steps in the sun.
 The long bread
 And the round bread
 In the windows.
 Zodiac under the counter.
 Next month the ship
 Will not make port.
 What will you do
 When the planets mull
 And merge in heaven?
 Ever see the population
 Make to the ocean as one?
 Fish in desperation?

WOMAN: (*to her daughter*)

Pick up your basket
Don't listen to him
His store burnt down
In the granary fire.

OLD MAN: Why doesn't he print it
 And pass it around.
 Every day I come here
 And he talks.

CAHOON

TEAMSTER: How many days
 Do you give us?
 I have only ten fingers
 And eleven mouths to feed.

CHESTNUT GIRL: His children will shake
 The trees. And I shall get
 My living from them
 And my chestnut fire.

TEAMSTER: What do you want us to do?

OLD MAN: Yes, what shall we do?

THE SPEAKER: Ever since the winter
 Of cold harshness
 When the masters
 Developed a grating
 Of infinite heat,
 The market's been choosy,
 In likelihood over
 The curable spoils.
 Why do you feel
 You must not offend
 The inventor. He is
 A chance combined with
 A trick. Not worthy
 Of anything more than a patent.
 God save us from the trade
 That preoccupies bores.
 That grating machine
 Will die as a ship sinks,
 Even the parrot will die.

OLD MAN: He's very tiresome
 And insulting too.

VEGETABLE SELLER: He's been here every day
 For a week or more.
 His voice is good
 But he's unpleasant.

CAHOON

THE SPEAKER: Among you no one can sing
 But a professional
 On a schedule.
 Your loves are criss-crossed
 All across the city
 Biting and chattering.
 The form of a precept
 Is its most important part;
 Then the words can be forgotten—
 But who among you has ever
 Spoken a personal moral?
 Friends of sacrifice!
 I ask you to be simple,
 Let the machine hide
 The complexities
 With its steel case.
 Return to the market
 Only for food.

CHESTNUT GIRL: Here's a dessert for you,
 A hot chestnut.

TEAMSTER: And a bit of cobblestone
 To cure the indigestion.

THE SPEAKER: You have moved the stars.
 I have fallen
 And my speech is ended.
 I am glad because
 No ship will have to sail
 With its grim fuel,
 And I shall never
 Speak again.
 Bite into your food
 And I shall watch
 In silence.

ALL: Iron! Iron!
 Our food has turned to iron!
 Have the fish in the sea?

Curtain

THE REMOVAL OF THE ACADEMY

The steps of a large university library. Academicians and students are running hither and yon; books are piled everywhere. Two skeptical owls are placed on either side of the stage to comment on the proceedings.

FIRST OWL: Graybeard caught his hood
 On the invisible morphemes.

SECOND OWL: What singular trippance
 For scarlet to catch.

FIRST OWL: He treats it like a loose sock.

SECOND OWL: Does he roll it for Easter,
 When the rabbits hutch?

FIRST OWL: His problem is deeper in debt.
 He is tireless and fundamental,
 Rechristened profound,
 Uncompromisingly mystical.

SECOND OWL: Is the smelling of books
 A sprouting tradition
 Or starting in crisis
 An average feat?

FIRST OWL: They tell age by the smell
 And reshuffle the pile,
 Spotting railroads in Hawthorne
 Inversion in Hughes.

SECOND OWL: O my chin!
 What a ceremony!
 I am a popular bookplate
 Without a line of salve.

FIRST OWL: The Graybeard is making a speech.

GRAYBEARD: Beautiful! Beautifull!
 How I love the carillon
 When it plays,
 Goosing the iris

CAHOON

Lifting them over the hedge.
Ah! The rapture of covers
That come off in my hands.
We'll have a chorus
This evening at nine,
When the architects adjourn
And our new home is found.

SECOND OWL: Where are they taking the books?

FIRST OWL: Sorting them by author
And by alphabets
Is such a task that
Only steps supply the space.
After the arrangement
The decision is direct.

SECOND OWL: How customary.
What is a home anyway,
Not even a choice.

FIRST OWL: Under the hulls of architecture
Water takes smoke, steel and oil . . .

SECOND OWL: Now the water . . .

FIRST OWL: And sends them, while the current
Stirs aggrieved, into the leveled veins,
Declining to find rest.
Graybeard's the cabined supercargo
Lashed with reckoning.
The books are fishermen
Who have no equal in the things
They do from habit, steady as the door
Will crack on light.

SECOND OWL: And the water plays over the carillon,
While books discolor the foam;
And snapping kelp, the man-of-war,
The marble islands sink beneath the sea.

Curtain

A SELECTION FROM THE WRITINGS OF ALICE D. ESTES

First Published in Springfield, Missouri in 1904

(*Editor's Note:* I owe the discovery of this delightful, but unknown, American writer to the painter Jean Varda. At his home in Monterey I first dipped into the pages of Mrs. Estes' remarkable volume, *The Gem of the School Room, Recitation Book of Prose and Poems*. This is a work which deserves wide recognition for its pure lyric quality and freedom of invention.)

PREFACE

THIS WORK I place before the public trusting that it will be received by both old and young with a hearty good cheer; that the little ones will imbibe the thoughts herein told, and that the older ones will smile approvingly. Every line is original. Many of the sadder pieces are the essence of my own heart, while those of the sublime are the very vibrations of my inmost soul.

—*Alice D. Estes*

THE MASTER COMES ON THE SCENE

It takes just such a chap as I to propound zoology. What do women and girls know about the animal kingdom, anyway? Just about as much as my hollow tooth would hold; yes, just about. Say, boys, did you ever try to ride a wheelbarrow? Well, the monkey on horseback has a strong resemblance to you fellows when astride the rouser-bout. I would like to go into details and tell you fellows all about the circus, but, for the lack of time, will confine myself to the main features and say the show was glorious. Yes, you bet it was glorious, simply a thunder and lightning affair; superb as the ancient doings of the gods of old with a goodly supply of modern spice as dessert. You boys who missed the sniptious oracle would better scratch your heads and take a seat in the way back corner of Know-nothing. As I have stated, my time is pressing, so will close by disclosing the zoological fact, that circuses and shows in general are like grandma's cupboard pies, only far better, for they are crested over with banana candy syrup. Hurrah, boys, hurrah, do be ready for the next show. Bury yourselves, not in Dunce-cap corner, but march forth in grand array to see the circus, show and play. You bet they are flavored spices. Well, yes, a fellow's purse-string loosens, but what of that tata, tata.

ESTES

A NUISANCE SUSTAINED BY THEORIST, TOGETHER WITH APPROPRIATE HINTS, REMEDIES, ETC.

What are rats? The nuisance of all creation. You would think so if you roosted in the garret. They chase across a fellow like a parcel of shoals after bait; and what a bait I am; they mince me from eve till morning. No getting rid of them by a jug-full; they hold the mortgage. Vacate is the remedy, but the disease is far better than the remedy. Barn loft is the tonic, but Dr. Good-for-nothing doesn't think it best for me. Grin and Endure is the old reliable bitters, and by taking them in small doses, I think that I will come out all right; especially as spring is here, and I have hopes that I can induce Messrs. Rats to rent out and move to the barn.

THE MORTHENIC GIRL

The new morthenic girl
Walks the streets in a whirl;
Often smokes cigarettes
And very frequently bets.

Shakes her fist with a dare,
Looks at you with haughty stare;
Her smiles are rather broadcast,
While she is audaciously fast.

THE TRAVELER

I believe that this is Mountain Inn,
Where you take all the tribe and kin;
I am the kindred of that tribe,
A good supper may start the bribe.

So, John, just pass the steak this way,
That cake, please, now that apple tray;
Rough road through the mountain past,
But a good supper and a rest at last.

GREEK, MADE CLEAR AS A WHISTLE

"Good morning, can I see the lady of the house?"

"Are you an agent?"

"Ahem! only a solicitor, madam."

"Well, book agents and solicitors in general are rather a peculiar class

of people, and it is greatly to my purse-strings disadvantage to entertain them."

"Madam, you needn't extend any courtesy to me whatever, other than just merely scan, for one moment, this little article," exhibiting a patent bed spring.

"Oh! you have coils of rattle-snakes! take them away! take them away!"

"Aha, madam, this is the twentieth century bed spring." And drawing himself up to his full length continued: "Madam, I can tell you most distinctly that I am not a book agent, nor one of those humbug lightning-rod peddlers."

"Beg pardon, for taking you for an equinoctial."

"Excuse me, madam, but I am floundering in the dark."

"Well, you see, there is an agent who pays his semiannual visits, and I thought that you were he."

"Ahem."

POULTRY RAISING

Poultry raising is another cue,
But why divulge it to such as you;

A haughty stare is my reward,
No poultry, madam, nor any lard.

A DANDY IGNORED BY THE GIRLS, DERIDED BY THEIR FATHERS

Yankee Dandy took this step,
Yankee Dandy fairly wept;
Yankee Dandy smiled again,
Yankee Dandy warded off rain.

Yankee Dandy walked one morn,
Yankee Dandy faced the storm;
Yankee Dandy met Fan's dad,
Yankee Dandy was called Pad.

Yankee Dandy felt all damp,
Yankee Dandy was termed tramp;
Yankee Dandy tustled with fate,
Yankee Dandy could get no mate.

ESTES

Sat himself down, pouted quite long,
Finally this was his woeful song:
Yankee Dandy has none to love,
No soft cooing, sweet turtle dove.

Alone, I fight the battles of life,
Breasting billows, tustling with strife;
For there's none who will look at me,
Except that doleful Twe-tee-wee.

A little wild, wee looking tot,
For her I wouldn't give one jot;
So to my bachelor den I go
To curb my wrath, and ease my woe.

THE COMICAL

"This dismal rainy day gives me the blues,
Hand me that paper, let me see the news.

'Wanted, a nice, good girl to do housework,
Who never will hang on the gate, nor shirk.'

Oh, what a comical ad, say, did you ever?
Editor must have thought himself quite clever."

"You gump, the editor did not do that,
It was most likely Irish Mike or Pat."

"Ha, here's another one that beats the band,
'Della, meet me at the banana stand.'

That editor must be a funny man,
To advertise in this way for that clan."

"Mamie, he had nothing to do with it,
He took their money, and he grinned, by grit."

"I knew Captain Nemo would have his say,
He almost always does on a rainy day."

ESTES

KER-WHACK AND OVER SHE WENT

Tom, do you want me to tell you 'bout the moon,
That great dish of fat and the larder spoon;
That sniptious, vindictive, wonderful old cow
Who over the moon went, raising such a grum row?

That wonderful cow swallowed both spoon and lard,
Though from her gestures the substance was hard;
A most grimy and tragical face that cow made
And this peaceful world at large tried t'upbraid.

Over the mountainous moon she did flee,
Falling right down into China's green tea;
Ha, took the pigtail Chinaman on her back,
Skipped over the moon and fell down ker-whack.

AN INDUSTRIOUS WIFE'S BETTER HALF TIPSY AND ON A STICK HORSE

Get up, Dock, why don't you go on,
We will not get home before dawn;
That wife of mine is fussing now,
I see the shadows 'thwart her brow.

You are clumsier than Granny Goose,
When I get home I'll turn you loose;
I'll let you wander over the mead,
Finally sell you to lazy Ned.

I'll take the scolding from wife,
She who's clouded my sunny life;
Into Sluggish corner I'll take my seat,
And stay quite sober until next week.

IN OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW

The Bible's good and true,
It tells what we should do;
Let us all pray to God
To let dad spare the rod.

ESTES

To make our dad the man
To bring us a brass band;
Then to Sunday-school we'd go,
Even through the blinding snow.

TEDDIE SPEAKS

Dis is wee tisser's pictur,
And dis is brozer Victur;
Dey both are so very tweet;
'Ittle tisser has pink feet.

Her 'ittle nose is pink too;
My mama tays dat will do;
Dat is when I pinch tisser's nose,
And when I bite her wee toes.

SALT

There is nothing like salt,
Even fills the brain's vault;
Tells its own gleeful tale,
And retains my pen frail.

Many cattle and swine,
Partake of this brine;
So you people now know
How the salt markets go.

THE KNIGHT

PAUL GOODMAN

"Chivalry is Pride Aspiring to Beauty."
—Huizinga

NOTHING COMES from nothing. These superstitious people are pitiful.

With love and loyalty they cling to, they hinder, their man of power and accomplishment; of sweet ease; of patience and instruction and social gayety; who can create something and has a new idea. Their hearts lift when he appears; they are grateful when he remains. Then next moment they are offended to discover that he does not live as they do. Out of their own glossary of banalities they fit interpretations to him; none of these fits; he is suddenly strange and repellent. What! are *they* persons of power and accomplishment; of sweet ease? If their conceptions were adequate to him, would they too not create something and have a new idea? Do they imagine that all the difference in the world comes from no difference at all? And that he will shock them according to their expectations? (This is precisely not to shock them!) But nothing comes from nothing.

Their spokesman steps forth and says: "Admitted you are better informed, have thought more about it, know your mind and have an idea—nevertheless we maintain our opinion." And at once he runs away and hides. Say: "You servile dog! Run away quick before I rub you the wrong way and teach you respect for evidence."

Well! Next winter let them sit without social gayety and sweet ease.

No. Noblesse oblige. (It is too pitiful.) Our man of patience cannot lend his hand, because noblesse oblige. He can, they cannot, therefore he must: noblesse oblige. For otherwise the work is badly done; it is servilely thought and timidly effected; and it awakens a disgust in every artist heart. If one has an artist heart, noblesse oblige. It is all right, you hateful little brothers, hinder as much as you can; he will nevertheless lend a hand, noblesse oblige.

I think there is resentment on *both* sides, but no matter! No matter! For the hateful little brothers are in need and it is by a law of first nature that they cling with love and loyalty; and on his side, noblesse oblige.

Next moment the resentment is grinding on the resentment, with flashing sparks. "Ha! Is one of *you* a person of power, and has an idea?"

Then he draws a line in the sand. "Cross that line with your idea! Only don't run away—for God's sake, don't hide," he cries with bitter loneliness.

And one steps up, up to the line, and crosses it.

"Now you are on my side!"

Do you think it is only a childish joke? No, no for when the new champion turns round to look where he is, he sees that all the others are in hiding, and he is on the side of the line with his brother. Do you imagine that there is now a sad, drawn out, lonely fight? No, they are laughing.

Every champion is an immortal peer; and they battle in tournaments according to the rules. There is no mortal blow. How could there be a mortal blow when every blow (given or received) is freely drawing on the power of the the heavens and the earth? Meantime each one is secretly longing for a mortal blow.

It is now too late either to die or live, because noblesse oblige. Jean therefore said, "*L'ennui mortelle—l'ennui mortelle de l'immortalité.*" (One would willingly commit some folly just to live on among the little brothers.)

But they are so superstitious, in what language is one supposed to talk to them? They believe that something excellent is achieved; they do not believe there is a natural cause. Here is a poem and every common word is bent to the expression; but they do not believe that the poet has, perhaps, a different integrity of life and speech than that which has led them to abuse their words in advertisements; they say, "Why need he have a low standard of living?" A teacher sees a beautiful and gifted boy who spends the days broodingly playing dice with himself (and marking down the score); the others pretend not to notice it, but the teacher patiently hour by hour awakens him, teaches him boldness toward the girls, and sets him free; then they think that the teacher will not have been in love with the boy. A man has set himself to reform the communities by returning to the functions of humanity and assuming that first things are first; then they are angry that he will not take part in an agitation that assumes the American economy as a whole. But nothing comes from nothing.

"Why need he speak so closely?"—"Why need he be in love?"

"You servile dogs, run away quick before I rub you the wrong way!"—is this the language in which one is supposed to talk to them?

No, no, noblesse oblige. And on *their* side it is by a law of first nature that they cling to, and hinder, him with love and loyalty.

And do you think, on *their* side, it does not take courage to put up with, with love and loyalty, such a hard man who does not relax his smile as he saps the consolations of habit and arouses secret longings, perhaps best forgotten? Sometimes they would dearly love to stone that smiling knight. Instead, gathering up their cattle and their children they have gone into hiding behind their walls, for here he comes, deadily marauding.

Deadly marauding, grinning, flaming in his nether parts and tongue.

The little brothers are in hiding, cowering behind their walls. It is not gay there. There is not much consolation in their habits. And because there is no idea, there is no patience, because it is hard to be patient without a

strong idea. They are becoming short-tempered and because they are longing for the exhilaration of a stroke of power, they are soon degenerating into violence on each other.

Why does he not come with this challenge? deadly marauding. With his affront? flaming in his nether parts and tongue. With his patience? Has he not a new idea to offend them with? Has he not courage to drain from his heart hour by hour in quiet love? Noblesse oblige!

2

The knight is "in his pride" (as we say a man is "in his cups").

His mind is closed until further notice.

His will is clenched until further notice.

(*God take care of him, until further notice.*)

He is ridiculous. He has begun to live by points of honor.

Now a point of honor is nothing but a principle of a man's integrity that he insists on when he no longer has to struggle for his integrity. For after a while a man of integrity becomes secure in his knightly integrity; he cannot be tempted from it, for nothing is so satisfying as his integrity. His *integrity* is in no danger. Why does he insist on a point of honor? He is preposterous. He is stripped to the naked pride.

His mind is closed until further notice. He feels, until further notice, that he is "alienated." That is to say, he feels that the principles of social existence of *those* people are not possible principles of existence for *him*. Therefore there is no use of listening to them, but the strategy is to attack at all points. (In fact he does not attack.) Good! but attack at all points. Instead, stripped to the naked pride, he has begun to live by points of honor, as if what they said made a difference after all.

God take care of him, until further notice, for he is not going to take care of himself.

He is preposterous, why should we not make a ridiculous analogy of him? He is like a vacuum-bottle, shut off from us all and with his bright armor reflecting back inward to preserve his little heat (as if all heat did not come from the sun and from radioactive fires). Surely some one will carelessly drop this fragile bottle and spill out the tepid soup.

His will is *clenched* until further notice;—because the courage is slowly draining from his heart. Oh!

Oh, I ought not to have made a joke of him, for look, his hands are clenched and the tears are starting in his eyes; and this beautiful and gifted boy—this beautiful and gifted boy is so exhausted that he is broodingly spending the days playing dice with himself (and marking down the score). Am I a teacher?

GOODMAN

"I stripped to the naked pride
ride rapidly (I lend you aid
noblesse oblige along the way).
My pride aspires to beauty, I

"have no peace among these folk
I cannot serve and will not strike.
Lord! give me peace at last, as surely
as Thou hast given me vain glory."

—But in fact you *don't* ride! Instead you broodingly spend your days, etc.
(This beautiful and gifted boy— Am I a teacher?)

3

Dear boy, stop rolling those dice a minute (and marking down the score), and I'll tell you the history of chivalry and of the beasts of the plain.

Long ago when George and Hercules came by here marauding and slew the animals, it is likely that those animals had really bitten the simple folk. For it was by original resolutions—yes, resolutions often made by night and carried out in the light—that the forest was made habitable for us all.

Later! there was a noble Knight demented who used to ride here, and he had terrible enemies and often gave battle. But these enemies, we are told, were nightmares of his own, they existed only in his imagination, and the battles were battles in dreams. But at least the simple folk ran no danger from them, if they could keep out of the way of the Knight's fury.

And now! (for the history has 3 parts), do you know what the situation is on the plain, on this smiling plain traversed, as you see, by easy streams? From right to left it is peopled by monsters, by threats, by subtleties. And none of these exist. They are the hobgoblins and nightmares of the folk themselves, who seem to have grown quite demented. And it is a lucky man indeed who riding freely by and failing to cry out according to the custom in the face of something that does not exist, is not himself taken to be a Giant or a Magic Pitfall, and cunning intentions attributed to him which if only he had them would long ago have made his fortune. Then it would now be necessary to write the reverse of the history of Don Quixote, for a thousand chimeras and oriental chasms exist everywhere except in fact and before a candid gaze.

These people believe in what does not exist. But we shall see that it is because they have trained themselves to believe that what exists does not exist, that they have come to believe that what does not exist exists.

But alas! the wretched knight who would like to perform a serviceable deed finds that he cannot employ the most obvious natural means—such as direct action, or releasing desire, or the use of words to express what is the case,—he cannot act, that is, in the only ways that make an act immortal, without becoming involved in the phantasmagoria.

Woe to him if for one moment he even hypothetically recognizes the existence of these fictions and tilts at them! for then there is no end of it and all the courage is drained from his heart. But there is a mystical gesture that I am going to teach you; use it when the occasion arises. Wave your right hand in front of your eyes in mock despair, so, and say "Oof," as a man does when the madness has become too thick. For it is too thick.

For God's sake, boy, do not, stripped to the naked pride, do not begin to entertain delusions about yourself and your own role, and confound the romance, so that there is *nowhere* a norm of serviceable reason. I have heard tell of a cult of knights gone demented who have a blazon with the motto "Alienation": they are "alienated," they say, from the values of the folk. They are preposterous: they are taking the dreams of these folk *seriously*, as if such things existed, as if such non-things were the cause of the social existence that these people have (such as it is). But nothing comes from nothing. To the degree that society exists it does not exist by fantasies but by natural powers and plenty of good endurance. This is also our society. As for the rest, what kind of man is it who feels he is alienated because somebody else has a bad dream?

No, no, use the little gesture and do not forget to say "Oof."

Do not attack at all points. Do not attack at all. But use, *use* (noblesse oblige) the most obvious natural means, direct action, releasing desire, and the use of words to express what is the case. To them it will seem that you are attacking at all points! How can they fail to imagine that you have cunning intentions which, if indeed you had them, would long ago have made your fortune?

This is the time to use the little gesture and say "Oof."

Others will cling to, and hinder, you with love and loyalty.

After a while their champion will step forth. Challenge him! Draw a line! If he steps across this line—

Now he is on your side.

4

SKETCHES FOR A ROMANCE BY AN AUTHOR WITH MORE
HEART FOR IT THAN MYSELF

We rode forth together, the young Welshman and I,—except that I do not really ride; but *he* rode and had his adventures, which I am too old for, whilst I mainly sat, here and there, and exchanged thoughts and gossip.

He kept his blazon hidden.

But I carried a sad shield and a sadder motto, though my heart is calm I swear, and God forbid that I should utter a complaint in this providential world that continues to reward me for virtues that I all unconsciously acquired, by the way, when I believed that I was solely bent, with all my ardor, toward my single goal. (And that ardor itself, that burnt my soul, has perhaps had its own reward, though I mistook it often for punishment.) But my blazon was—a Wintry Sun; and my motto was *J'aurais servi: I would have served.*

The First Adventure: The Three Damsels Bewitched

There were three maidens who lived together in an apartment and daily went to business. Their names were Leah, Clotilde and Hermione.

These three closely attached themselves to Davor, not only because he was gifted and handsome, but also because although he was as young as themselves, he was not under a spell. But they were entranced in a deep spell.

They were wasting away in their little apartment, and each time he came to dinner he noticed that they ate less and less of the food, and one of the girls was losing her eyesight.

Clotilde wanted with all her heart to be a dancer, and she worked at modelling dresses.

Hermione wanted to be a dress-model, and she was a typist.

Leah wanted above all to be a housewife, and she worked far into the night as a bookkeeper.

Continually, with bright eyes they talked of their several ambitions. They grieved that the time was passing. And they complained bitterly of the peculiar hazards of their daily jobs with respect to their chosen careers.

Thus, to keep the slimness of a model, Clotilde was undermining the strength necessary for a dancer. By bending over her typewriter, Hermione was distorting the posture necessary for a model. And even in the evenings, Leah could not see her little son.

"What!" cried Davy, "if you have a child and you want above all to make a home, why don't you make a home?"

"The worst of it is," said Leah, whose husband was a sailor in distant seas, "the worst of it is that my husband does not know that my eyes are going bad because of my job, and I am afraid to write to him that I wear glasses, because maybe he will stop loving me."

One of the chief things that stood in the way of Hermione's becoming a model was the following: As a model she would make what seemed to her a munificent salary; but she had been strictly brought up and she

felt, in the bottom of her child heart, that she was worth only enough money to pay for her board and lodging; therefore she worked as a typist.

"Look," Davy said sharply to Clotilde, "have you ever tried to make a living in a dance-company?"

"Yes I have. But what I want is to get some money so that I may study seriously."

"Are you saving any money?"

"No. You see, to be a model I have to spend so much on clothes, to look the part."

Obviously these young ladies were demented.

They were under a spell.

Before it is possible to go directly to what one has at heart, one must deviate into a means to the end, which to be sure does not lead to the end but contradicts it. For otherwise! if one did not deviate, there would be the *danger* of attaining what one has at heart.

But noblesse oblige! the young Welshman slept with Clotilde and then she became a dancer after all.

And Hermione, who desired to exhibit herself and therefore hid herself in a deformed posture,—when she knew of the seduction of Clotilde, now took her friend's job and exhibited herself after all.

And weak-eyed Leah inherited the apartment and brought home her little son.

Thus in glory ended the First Adventure.

The Second Adventure: The Cloister of the Élite of the Believers in Magic

We came to a great University where old friends of mine did their research and made programs for the nation; and I thought it would be salutary if Davor became acquainted here, in this pleasant square shaded by maples.

(I say "old friends of mine" because I remembered that there was once in them a spark of life. They often do not act as though *I* were a friend of *theirs*, but I do not live by points of honor.)

Now these professors gave themselves out to be scientists of society. "Let us hope that they are physicians of society, for a physician follows close after nature";—but I was dubious, because in their dress and manners my friends looked, not like naturalists, but like small financiers.

In fact this maple-shaded square proved to be the cloister of the élite of the believers in magic.

They believed in the miracle that our social world continues to exist and

even to change without a chain of proximate causes. And they believed in the influence of the invocation of Names. It was because of the Names of certain social relations that a Mister made profits.

They did not (like Karl Marx) follow the harried people into the market; and one did not hear them mention the lust and the anxiety by which a man takes leave of his heart in the morning to go to work.

Was it a mere short-cut in formulation? No such a thing! for these Names formed a great *system* of Names to keep our society in being; and in this system there was no loophole for the direct action of men.

For the direct action of a man and his brothers and sisters who one day come to their senses and—initiate a chain of proximate causes. Eh?

No fear! no fear! Direct action unmediated by a name has no place in social science. Therefore no fear!

In their personal contacts with each other, my friends had become great experts at avoidance. They had invented the remarkable categories of Private Life and Professional Life; and with regard to the folk, they spoke of the Primary Environment and the Secondary Environment. Therefore, having *taken* leave of their hearts (morning and evening!) they easily came to take leave of their senses.

Oh, when a true man is found in error, he is paralyzed, because his thoughts go very deep and close; he blanches and his hair stands on end; he tosses a sleepless night and alarms his bedfellow. This was not to be much observed at the University.

But Davy, as soon as he saw that the manners of my old friends imitated those of small financiers, began to draw heavily on the excellent sherry.

For us, Professor T. had set to making tea.

It was not *altogether* my friends' fault that they were superstitious, for the common people themselves had come to imagine that they really acted according to their Names and affiliations; so that the science of the Names really seemed to describe the subject-matter of the Names.

These names were magical and could call up the reality! (But will it come? will it come? as Hotspur asked.) My dear friend Dr. L., a director of the policy of the nation, was now exclaiming: "If we find the right propaganda, the slogan that satisfies the aspirations of the masses, we can accomplish thus and so."

At this I began to wave my right hand in front of my eyes.

I waited in vain for Davor to say "Oof"; for by now he had drained a bottle and a half and he was making funny faces. He began to hiccup.

"It is astonishing," said L. to me sotto voice, "to see a young American so personally disturbed by the Situation."

"He is partly Welsh."

"Ah, so."

"—You told me," cried Professor T. testily, "to let the water come to a boil. But how does one know when the water comes to a boil?"

With a little click Davy came to his senses and he said "Oof."

Adventure the Third: A Dragon

When a man had graduated from the University and was a Doctor of the Double Dementia—to believe in the things that do not exist and to be trained not to see the things that do exist,—then he was a fit teacher for the children and the adolescents.

"Let us stop awhile at this School," I suggested, "where the youth is famous for its beauty and intelligence, and is not yet demented."

"Is it again manned by old friends of yours?" said the Welsh youth disrespectfully; and when I shamefully admitted that it was—for I too had been a teacher—the young man said "Giddap."

But how can I help it if with obsessional repetition I seek out my old friends and try to revivify friendliness? This is the nature of our chivalry. Aspiring to beauty, to the glow and pause, more original, I think, than the feelings of childhood—and perhaps it is the lively safety of Mother Earth herself—we band together for comfort and reminiscence; without rivalry, for none can have an adventure that is not his own.

I saw that the girls and boys of my old school were taking their endogamic sexual pleasures as of yore; and that a warmth of affection glowed in their loyalty to each other and their school.

"But it must be distracting to formal studies," I said sympathetically to my former colleagues, for I knew what a teacher was up against. "The method—is to *use* these forces." And from my trunk I produced a little Latin primer that I had prepared, stories of rapine and dirty jokes, a delight to translate accurately at the age of 15.

I saw in their eyes that I should be lucky to get out of here half alive.

"There are no such goings-on as you mention."

"What! What?" I took it for granted that they were demented; nevertheless I was surprised. "Ah! perhaps when one of you appears, the lovers disengage, the boys put their hands in their own pockets, and there is a lull in the conversation. Believe me, you miss something. If you would sit down and welcome a caress, soon they would no longer notice your presence (an experience also not without its pathos)."

"A teacher who loses his distance loses his authority."

"Good God, men! some of you have been touched by the creator spirit;

all of you have achieved something or other. Isn't this enough *natural distance*?"

"There are certain confidences that a teacher ought not to allow himself to receive. It regularizes the aberrations and gives them a right. We aren't fools, we know what goes on. But if we behave as if no such things existed, they'll pass away and not hinder a normal adjustment."

"You wicked non-teachers! you retarders! Will you strengthen the illusion that they have already that there is a secret satisfaction that they'll learn about later, if they bide their time, that is if they bide your time. For surely *they* cannot believe that you are so demented as to turn away from their felicity without having something of your own that is better. But you have no such thing and there *is* no such thing! And alas, when they grow up to realize it, they won't have their easy ways either.

"You by no means know what goes on, what gayety and mutuality, the emulation of what is possible and the pasture of the soul; and all of this under the most beneficent sign that there is in all the heavens, the recognition of the desires within. Under this sign one is borne *steadily* onward, with increasing power, to victory. But if you dampen this influence—by resentment, eh?—then you doom them to fiascos like your own.

"*Resentful* persons are not teachers. Aren't you ashamed to envy the exploits of boys? (Is this the proper distance?)

"But when you train yourselves not to see what exists, then indeed you begin to see what does not exist."

—They believed, they believed that the lads and the maidens were racing in a field of deep pitfalls, of incorrigible habits and arrested fascinations; but that there was only a strait and tortuous path on which, creeping along, one could arrive whole at the goal of exclusive matrimony where one would be protected by trained anxiety and romantic illusions. Above all, they believed that there was a nightmare dragon marauding, flaming in his nether parts and tongue, ready to destroy whoever slipped on the slimy way.

But in fact it is only a rough field where every smart kid can leap, tumble and spring up again. And Eros is ever serviceable in harness, to pull him out (though he will also take wing for short flights).

If there are games so pleasant that they want to play on, do you therefore forbid the games? God forbid. Let them play the more vigorously at the next games! Those who love to play the most have the most power to play. If your final game is the best, they will want to play most at that. (Does what is true to nature need your protection?)

"Is it logical to do what you do? To assure the goal you cramp their speed

all along the way. Answer me, I challenge you! *in what other part of education do you reason the same way?* rather than let each course set fire to the next.

"But you *purposely* dampen their ardor in order to end in joylessness."
? ?

The hateful little brothers had all run away. They were in hiding. And when one stuck out his head—suddenly I saw that *I* was the dragon.

Next moment I was on the alert. For there was this beautiful and gifted boy—(you see I am subject to obsessional repetitions). He was broodingly rolling dice with himself and marking down the score.

"Which of you," I cried indignantly, "is responsible for neglecting him during the eleven years he has been with you, and he has come to this?"

For answer they began to throw stones, and I was lucky to come out of it alive.

But I shall return again, and I hope next time in numbers.

Complaint of the Stoned Knight

"Give me air! air! But no matter, let me die quickly, before I again breathe the same air as these persons.

"For I have heard the deepest reasons that came to me in love and service, that came to me with the same authority not my own with which I wrote the book of community plans (and I am the author of *Nestor*)—I have heard reasons called rationalizations of base motives I am not even aware of!

"Please! do these gentlemen imagine that ideas that meet the test of need, and cast light, and lead to patient service, are conjured up as means for one's personal convenience? And that poems of love are formalized by less than the whole heart?

"They said I was intelligent and *therefore* could think up a clever defense,—these fools who have never known, it seems, the fascination of the better reason, that brings heart and soul to a pause.

"Well! from now on my mind is open to all comers. There is no nonsense so abject that I am not ready to entertain it,—if certain persons I could name are generally regarded as honest."

The Fourth Adventure: The Blazon

Meantime, pursuing his adventures elsewhere than among my friends, and getting more gratification from them along the way, Daffy too ended up in a ditch alongside the road. He was thus able to confirm the formula that "Life is simple but hard." Not complex (as my friends imagined), not easy (as no one is fool enough to imagine), but simple and hard.

And while he was lying there, more dead than alive, there passed by two members of the petty bourgeoisie.

Now a grand bourgeois is an ancient who shows how the strong and original virtues can be bent to the purpose of accumulation. A petty bourgeois has never known original virtue at all, but what he imagines to be virtue is the effect, and the means, of somebody else's accumulation, rather than the cause of his own. To a grand bourgeois abstinence is a virtue and daring is a virtue. But what a petty bourgeois imagines to be virtues are emulation and timidity.

"So young," said one, "and already on the skids." He clicked his tongue against his teeth. "This is the boy who has been under an evil influence." And he whispered something to his friend which I might in turn whisper to the reader, but by no means entrust to paper.

The other thought that it was indeed Balinese. "Let's get out of here," he said, "before a policeman comes and we have to appear as witnesses."

(In this way it is possible to die unattended in New York City or along the roadsides of northern New Jersey.)

"Well, he must pay the penalty."

"The wages of sin is death."

Now when the first said "Pay the penalty," Daffy's right eye opened wide and flamed. And when the other said "The Wages of Sin," then his other eye opened and he leaped to his feet and seized them by the lapels of their coats.

"You dogs!" he shouted, half between sleep and waking, "how dare you speak of me in such a language of exchange and hire? I know you for what you are by the words you use, petty bourgeoisie!"

"Now do you think I am afraid or ashamed that my behavior has led me and must still lead me to disaster? In the present case my hopes were indeed a little sanguine and imprudent, but even at the best I know that in the end desire is death (just as the repression of desire is death).

"No, no! this *chain*, this bond, this *bondage*, of cause and effect, of *consequence*, is what I glory in and give *thanks* for—" he was panting and gasping, but each has his own way of praying. "It is the nature that reveals to me something more than I merely desired. It is my share in nature. Because a man like myself does not learn much from what he desires until he sees the consequences.

"Say that the Scorpion stings itself to death and I'll honor you—"

This was the blazon of Davor and this was his device. The emblem was a Scorpion deadly-ringed, and the motto was *Fatum Sui*, "His Own Doom." Nevertheless! isn't it better, I challenge you, that he carry this misery along the open road where at every crossing he is touched by strokes of joy, than

to sit broodingly rolling the dice with himself and marking down the score?—until, God willing, we come upon a physician with as much love as I have for him, and more wisdom.

Lord bless — — and gently heal
the sharpened corners of his smile.

Thou canst from no matter what
by life the strength of life create

and sweet ease. Though boy-horrifying
memories are ever crying,

Thou makest them the riches of
victory and quiet love.

The Fifth Adventure: The Girl from the Mountain Convent

"Why are you so quiet, Davor? Whose medal are you wearing? And where is the golden scorio, your ill-luck charm?"

—For a young knight will often wear an ill-luck charm, to remind him that the disasters that befall him are those that belong to his own nature, till he is sure of his integrity.

"I am in love," he said. "The medal is a superstitious medal that belongs to the girl Joanna—see, it is St. Christopher. And do you know?"

"What must I know?"

"*Although or because* she believes in these ancient allegories, she has never even heard of the other folk-tales that have made our people demented. She seems to love me almost as I am. Shall I not love her for it—as well as for herself?"

"What do you say, she has not heard of them? Is she an imbecile?"

"No, no. She was brought up in a convent in the mountains, and those sisters taught her nothing, either false or true, except hunting, music and the saints' lives. Now suddenly she appears in our society—a virgin, but very desirous, very desirous once it occurs to her—and she does not take alarm at the terrible hobgoblins, and she fails completely to see the things that do not exist. We love each other by the side of the road—very desirous. Shall I have a child with this wicked innocent?"

"Wait until she finds out your true nature!" I warned him prudently. "Wait until the others have told her that you speak the truth just in order that people may imagine it is not the truth, and that when you love it is just in order to do harm; wait until she is persuaded that strong ideas are rationalizations."

"No no no no. They have already got to work on her. But when they whispered—"

"Yes—"

"Why, this I had already told her. And when they attributed to us the subtlety and malicious intentions which if indeed we had them would long ago have made our fortunes—"

"Yes, yes—"

"She said to them, for she is keen! 'Poor folk! All of this hatred, resentment and superstition is nothing but disguised love and loyalty that you cannot help have for the honor and freedom of these knights! Then why do you make yourselves miserable by indirection? Why do you not go directly to what it is you desire?—if that's possible; for he tells me, what I have not yet noticed, that life is hard, though simple. (But I have found it easy and simple.)'"

"Let her have your child, the fool, and she'll find that it's hard."

—But the tears started into my eyes, and they are in my eyes forever, now also when I am writing about it. For I too once met and loved and married and had a child with a dear lady whose blue eyes likewise did not see the things that do not exist, and she loved me almost as I am. Many times I compared her with Saint Harmony my patroness; and she was the heart of many of the songs I used to sing.

But although or because we were not demented as the others were, we became demented in our own way; and we made what was simple complicated and harder than was necessary. And the end of it was meaningless words and the deeds of fools and the disquiet of our daughter.

Adventure the Sixth: The Tournament

Stare, looking for an answering sign of comprehension. There is an angry stare returned. Now stare is *grinding* against stare.

The smiles have deepened into frowns, and frown is pushing against frown, till they are tangled in a cloud. (Is there a beam of a smile in this thunderous cloud?)

In vain you wave your right hand across your eyes. It is a true conflict and it will not vanish.

Then at this moment draw a line; and say—if it is the case; but if it is not the case, what are you doing here in this tournament of knights?—say: "I am not afraid of anything. What are *you* afraid of?"

And supposing he also is not afraid of anything, but will follow where his nature and his best reasons mislead him, just as they have misled you both into this ignorant battle: then he crosses the line.

"Now you are on our side!"—what a childish joke!

The joyous peal of this childish joke is ringing, is *ringing* in my memory. Surely there is the sunny beam of a smile in the thunderous cloud. And the

rush of the happy feelings of my eighth to tenth years is reforming from all sides forever. (How could there be a mortal blow?) God blast the dismal customs that drained the courage from that joy! so even now, except in violent danger, it does not rush into my heart and I am already sad. I know that these persons still imagine the right is on their side, and still I see them purposely dampen ardor; *still* they are in the wrong, and I . . . But let me not mar the description of the true combat with the further mention of such persons.

Do you imagine that there is now a sad, drawn out, lonely fight? No, they are laughing. They fight in the tournament according to the rules, and there is no mortal blow.

The rules are direct action and releasing desire and the use of words to say what is the case.

Every blow, given or received, is the actuality of a natural power; how then could there be a mortal blow—given or received?

Every blow is a resolution made by night, that looks eerie in the light. Nevertheless, act it out.

Such a blow, given or received, pauses in the air.

Soon it is storming at every heart.

We others perhaps once receive an immortal blow. We do not deal out immortal blows. These champions are in the *habit* of dealing out (and of receiving!) the immortal blows.

Will not their combat, blow by blow, be a sacred dance, blow by blow actualizing the powers of the heavens and the earth?

The combat, blow by blow, of the true champions is the proportion of the violence of the heavens and the earth. The blood that is spilled by direct action revives the courage of all mankind.

This is the tournament, this is the sacred dance, this is the prayer of thanks.

When something is said that is the case: it is *evidence*. You cannot pass it by; you must not discount it; you will not go on as though it had never been said. But now you may see how a true man is found in error! He blanches, his hair stands on end, and he cannot lift his arm,—when he realizes that the experience of his first to his thirty-third years has misled him into this ignorant combat.

Meantime each one is secretly longing for a mortal blow. Too late! It is now too late either to die or live, because noblesse oblige. *This* is the mortal boredom of immortality. One would willingly commit some folly just to live on among the little brothers.

In the rush, standstill and violence of the powers of the heavens and the earth; and the streaming of time both outside and inside roaring; and desire loosed, released, and always at once fulfilled;—but wherever is a blockage and eddy, in deprivation and anxiety the little personalities come into being, longing to die and stream onward and soon achieving it;—

the seeing sees whole scenes, either still or in measurable motion; food is what is unlike transformable into what is like; rhythm consists of the patter of speech, of the double and triple gait, and of the climax of orgasms; experience grows out of memories, and love out of habits of desire; there are true reasons; and the ego also develops according to its form.

So long as these forms, these reasons and strokes of love (lovely graces, surely) are preyed on by a little ego person to keep alive his deprivation—he has no life of his own, but how he struggles to die as much as possible!—they have no important meaning; the penurious effort to make them endure is pitiable; they are not the subjects of strong songs of praise;

but let them draw freely for their power of life on the standstill and violence of the heavens and the earth, on desire ever loosed and released—these do not strive either to die or live for they are immortal,—then these forms of art, these reasons and these strokes of love have all the meaning that there is; in them we easily achieve immortality; and they are the subjects of strong songs of praise.

Every immortal peer has a sovereign territory. Here, you see, everything is characteristic, the way of tying knots, the acts of love, and the wars. Nothing is fresh and natural; all is blighted by artifice. It is his Style. It seems that it is only in this Style that he can draw freely on the rush and standstill of power. He has tortured himself, by direct acts and saying what is the case, in order to bend himself to this ease.

What! are not the springs of life easily available? Why need he torture himself to our surprise and confusion? (Hush, little brother, are *you* a person of power and accomplishment?) See, here are the springs of life—are they available? Ah, you are vomiting with disgust and paralyzed by anxiety. But if you would closely read these surprises, you would find that which revives courage in your heart.

Some of the peers have a boundless territory. You cannot raise a question, for already you are compelled in every faculty. Others possess only little counties. But each is sovereign in his own and has equal honor; you cannot enter here except under servile conditions, soon relaxed. You breathe the atmosphere of solitary joy, and the flags are gaily flying.

An Outline of the True Theory of Our Friends

Dear boy, are you lonely? Is it sad to traverse this polity of peers, where there is a commonwealth (the only commonwealth!) but no community, as though one were with statues, though each has an intimate voice? From the dead it is already wonderful to hear speech; but why aren't the living knights fraternal, to give each other comfort and exchange reminiscences?

Therefore let me explain the true theory of our friends and how it is with us.

(For lately a vulgar writer said that the intellectuals are neurotic because of their maladjustment; and if it were so we could not expect them to sit friendly down together. But I challenge this lie.—)

Begin first with an experiment: It is the case that a man is acquainted with many hundreds of persons. Now if you find that one of our friends is acquainted with one or two others of our friends (as we ask a new acquaintance "Do you know so and so?"), then he will prove to be acquainted with fifty or a hundred others. But an ordinary man is likely to know only three or four others. How is this? The acquaintanceship of our friends is less superficial; it probes, it interests itself, it pauses; therefore it rapidly extends to other acquaintances, and these become mutual. Is it that they have, as we say, a "common interest" that gathers them together? No, it is that their selves are more available, and the selves give each other comfort; as selves they are not strange to each other. Examine the "common interests" which indeed they do have: they are the intimate voices and the probing reasons.

Thus potentially, it is our friends who are least alone, whereas other persons less easily come to know each other.

Our friends are simply those who have addressed themselves to something that exists. By "addressed themselves" I mean not with the glancing relation which other persons use, when all the while their hearts are set on conformity, emulation, ambition, according to the conventional norms. I do not mean that our friends habitually address themselves to things that exist, for then they would be true champions, and few of our friends are so. Yet even to have once and for a season been absorbedly devoted to something that exists, makes a great difference: it affirms the integrity of the self. (By contrast those other persons hardly have themselves, for it is by drawing on natural power that one affirms one's-self.) Afterwards, though our friends go astray, it is not possible to go so far astray as the others.

Shall we say that our friends are neurotic? It is precisely the others who are potentially neurotic.

Our friends are not neurotic, but most of them become eccentric. It is easy to see how this occurs. A young person, brighter than the rest, is too bright to be persuaded that something that exists indeed does not exist. He addresses himself to it. Afterwards, by contrast, the rewards of his non-educators have for him less charm. Perhaps he seeks his own rewards (sometimes, alas, in private fancies that exist as little as the normative fancies). Or else he goes from one thing that exists to another that exists. Soon he is a full-fledged eccentric. In this way we see how creative ability, intelligence, strong desire, common sense, are all principles of cumulative eccentricity,—so that in the end our friends, too accustomed to waving their hands in front of their eyes, begin to deny that perfectly ordinary goods are good; but it's nothing but short-temper.

Ideally our friends are endogamous, like the true champions. Early undiscouraged from their desires that exist, they are not constrained like the others to love only the strange one who was not banned (and worse, to find in her a kind of infantile memory, from before ever they had a self). But their desires are continuous with the other things to which they have been addressing themselves; this continuum is a rich and ordinary love. Further their selves, available to be touched, band together as we have seen, for comfort and to exchange reminiscences. . . . Now couples are exclusive as the strength of their attention to one another, that is as the degree to which themselves are their things that exist; this *richness* is said to be "romantic love," because it is different from the everyday and it is felt for that which is strange. On the contrary, this richness is nothing but what is left to the *ordinary* love among our friends.

But because we have sinned, we are exiled from one another. Persons that have drawn freely on natural powers, feel themselves alien in the world! and with surly exasperation they protect themselves from their friends. Or they hypothetically assume the reality of nightmares (just to live on a little! just to live on a little!), and soon they are exchanging mortal blows about things that do not exist. And I have even known them to be envious of one another! as if it were possible to have an adventure that is not one's own.

To My Boys and Girls at B—.

Quaker Hill—Norwood
August-October 1944

LAYOVER IN EL PASO

ROBERT LOWRY

THE COACHES are crammed and jammed, and by the time that Los Angeles-Chicago train gets to Douglas Arizona there's no more room anywhere and a whole pack of eager, disappointed soldiers are left behind waiting with their little furlough-bags at the station. Inside the train everybody has gone mad with the fury of the war. Who cares! says the soldier, going back to his tent from a furlough. Who cares! says the girl whose boyfriend is far away.

Who cares! says the lonely wife returning from seeing her husband for the last time before overseas duty. She holds hands with three soldiers she never saw before and she has starry eyes and a short skirt and helps kill a pint on the platform.

The train moves slowly through the desert, and everyone is bored looking out the window at the thirsty burnt-out flatland. The people in the train go in upon themselves to pass the time. A fat lady with two kids dozes off to sleep, her head rocking back and her mouth opening with a soprano snore. A girl named Lulu with blue mascaraed eyes looks hard at a soldier passing and on his next trip through the cars he sits down and talks with her and wonders what he'll manage to get around to when the coach is dark tonight. A thin effeminate fellow about thirty-five in a snappy blue suit explains to two soldiers sitting across from him that he is travelling for the government on very important business, otherwise he'd be in uniform too. Than which he'd like nothing better of course. The two soldiers just listen to him for a while, then get up and leave. Loud shouts and laughter come from the men's washroom—there are thirty soldiers who couldn't find seats packed in there, and they have gotten around to telling all the dirty jokes they can think of.

Red dozed over in the corner. He was coming from Indio California and he had already been on the train one rocky cold night. In Indio he was on kitchen detail to an air force unit, he washed their trays for them. But nobody looking at him would have suspected this, he wore a uniform like anybody else and might have been a pilot for all some girls knew. It was the one good thing about being a soldier, you all dressed alike.

Next to him sat a little skinny old lady with faded blue eyes wearing an oldfashioned black hat held on with a stickpin. She carried all her stuff in a shopping bag and a paper box tied up with some soiled Christmas-package ribbon. She was very eager to talk and chose Red as the one to

listen to her. It was all about her son who'd been killed in the last war. The kind of pie he liked, and some of his sayings when he was a child. She leaned forward eagerly when she spoke, looking like a bird that hears a worm in the ground, and everytime Red started dozing off she would talk even louder and higher, and put her hand on his arm. Finally he remembered someplace he had to go up the car a ways and mumbled something in apology and dashed off.

Out on the platform a sailor offered him a drink, and he took a long one and coughed. "Thanks pal," he said.

The sailor was a short stocky fellow with bright eyes that were set close together under thick eyebrows. "Hey, there's a couple quail I been talkin to up in the next car," the sailor said. "You wanta try out on one of them?"

"Sure," Red said.

So they went up to the next car, right on through the car with Red looking anxiously at every face to see what kind of babe it would be.

They were sitting in the last seat. "Jesus," Red said, "they're kinda old, ain't they?"

"This is Red," the sailor was saying. "I don't know either of yer names but I guess you know em yerself so it's all right."

So the two babes laughed and since the seat opposite was empty Red and the sailor sat down.

Both the babes wore pants and both of them, judging by the little lines around their eyes, were thirty-five years old anyhow. The one had a tilted-up nose and rather large eyes, but when she smiled the whole coach was filled up with big teeth. The other kept looking at Red. She was smaller, had shrewd bright eyes and short black hair with just a few strands of grey in it. She wore an orange polkadot scarf around her neck and a blue pants suit. Her sandalled feet she kept tucked up under her. Red just looked at her. He'd spent nine months out in the California desert and he couldn't help it.

"Where you comin from, Red?" she said, in a voice that reminded him of somebody like Katharine Hepburn.

"Oh, I'm comin from Indio," he said.

"Furlough?" she said.

"Yeah," Red said. He found he was holding on to the arm of the seat pretty tight. She was smiling at him all the time, there were crinkles around her sharp bright eyes, and her wellmanicured hands played with the polkadot scarf at her throat. She's a little tight, Red thought.

"Your first furlough?" she said.

"Yeah," Red said. "I waited a heck of a time for it. Nine months. That's a heck of a time."

"Where you going?" she said.

"Back to Elder Tennessee," Red said.

"Wife and kids?"

Red blushed all over and looked down at his hands. "Ah, I haven't got any wife and kids," he said. "Just mom and pop and a couple brothers and sisters."

"Well, you *might* have a wife and kids," she said, looking at him sideways. "I mean you're *capable* of it, aren't you?"

Gee, she talks with big words like somebody in a movie, Red thought. She was sure dressed nice too. Why the devil was she talking to *him*?

"Yeah, I guess I'm capable of it," Red said. He was still blushing a little.

"Well let's go out on the platform and have a drink," the sailor said.

Before long they all had their arms around each other and were singing "What A Friend We Have in Jesus." It didn't feel to Red like she had anything on under that costume. The whiskey and her made him feel faint. She kept laughing and saying clever things. Her name was Kay and the big-toothed woman she called Boots. They had a standing joke between them about somebody named Harry but Red couldn't figure out which of the two women Harry belonged to. Kay was always saying, "Oh *Harry* doesn't know the half of it!" And then a little later Boots would say, "If Harry could see you *now*!" And Kay would say, "Oh he's so *boring* hon. I *hate* boring people. I'm out for a good *time*," and pull Red's head down to her and bite his ear. Once she put her tongue in his ear, which sobered him for a minute, it was such a surprise.

About seven o'clock they all got hungry and went and stood in line to get in the diner.

"It's one of the reasons I just *hate* the war," Kay said. "You've got to *wait* and *wait* and *wait*." She looked mad for a second but then she began to laugh and took Red's cap off and put it on her own head, it sure made her look funny. Then they were all giggling and laughing and Boots said, "Did you ever hear about the lady moron who went to bed naked with a fellow and nine months later she woke up with a little more on?" and Kay pinched her fat rear and said, "That's what you get for telling *that*." Red saw all the other soldiers in line looking at him and he knew they were all wondering. He felt pretty swell. He had thought for nine months about something like this happening when he went home on the train.

It was sort of funny in the diner though. There were just two dinners advertised on the menu because of the food rationing and she got in a big argument with the colored waiter about a shrimp cocktail. She must have a shrimp cocktail. "Just what's on the menu, mam," he said. "You could at least find *out* if they have a shrimp cocktail," she said. "Yes mam," he said. He went away and came back and said, "They got some shrimp back there but it ain't for serving in no cocktail."

"Why I never heard of such a thing," she said, turning to Red. "Go get me the dining steward."

"Yesm," the tall black negro said.

In a minute the steward came, a little beady-eyed fellow in a blue business suit with menus in his hand. She explained the whole situation to him very slowly, as if to a child, and he didn't say anything until she was all finished. Then he said, "No," and walked away.

It took about fifteen minutes more to get the waiter back and Red was trying to pick out his choices on the two meals. He wanted to choose the same things she chose but everything he said he liked she disagreed with. "Are you *really* going to order milk?" she said. "Oh I can't *stand* milk." So he ordered coffee.

The sailor and Boots had to take a table at the other end of the car. They all finished about the same time and went out on the platform and had another drink. Kay kept her arms around Red's neck most of the time, she was about a foot shorter than him and he had to keep bent over so she could reach him. He kissed her a lot and she took to that all right. He got in some good feels too. Only once did she object and then she said, "Oh *don't* darling," and then kissed him again. Red didn't know what to think of her.

They all went back to their seats and there were only two available so the women sat on the men's laps. They made so much noise everybody looked around at them and Red felt kind of embarrassed. He tried to pass it off by winking at one little soldier with glasses on but the soldier just stared at him with his big blue eyes for a minute, then turned around and went on reading Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason."

The women weren't embarrassed at all though, they kept shouting and laughing at each other and Boots reached over and pulled Red's ear and said, "Hey Red, I bet you never heard about the little moron who thought a mushroom was someplace to pitch woo in," and then went off into gales of laughter with her big teeth filling up the car. Kay's arm was around Red's head and her hair was up under his chin. She kept buttoning and unbuttoning one of his shirt buttons. "Oh I'm tired, *horribly* tired. I'm going to sleep just like this. Red doesn't mind if I sleep on top of him tonight, do you Red?"

Red didn't know what to say to that, he looked over at the kid reading the book and then back at the sailor. "Naw," he said. He could feel himself blushing but it was o.k. too, only he'd never met any woman like Kay before except maybe in the movies. These women really live fast, he thought.

Red half dozed-off and woke up to see the big creased face of the conductor over him.

"Better get your luggage together," the conductor was saying to Kay. "Next stop is El Paso." "Oh my *God*," Kay was saying, "my luggage is all over the *train*." And Red had to help her go and round it up, it was pretty swell luggage, yellow leather stuff, and heavy as hell.

All four of them were still half asleep when they got off the train in El Paso. Red carried luggage under his arms and in both hands and sweated as bad as he did back in Indio.

When they got into the station Kay suddenly stopped and turned around to him the way some movie actress like Bette Davis would and said, "Darling are you going to go on tonight or stay in El Paso?"

The question hit Red like two tons of bricks and he looked over at the sailor and Boots as if for an answer but the sailor was whispering in Boots' ear and they were laughing to beat the band. Then he looked at Kay and her shrewd eyes with the little crinkles around them were looking at him in a sort of funny way. What in the devil did she mean, Red thought.

"I hadn't thought about it," Red said.

"Well you'll have a *horrible* time finding *anyplace* to stay in this ole town," Kay said. "But I was thinking, Boots and I have an apartment and you can sleep over there if you want to."

Red still just stood there looking at her. His blood-pressure was up about twenty points and a big lump had settled in his throat. He noticed all of a sudden how her two little breasts pushed up through the thin blue blouse.

". . . if you'll promise to be *real* good," she said, and laughed at him again.

Jesus, Red thought, I'll never get back to Elder now and I told Mom and they're all going to be there looking for that train . . .

But there didn't seem anything else to do, with her standing looking at him that way with her bright eyes, as if challenging him or something, so he just said, "I guess I'll stay here tonight," and Kay laughed at him and kept looking into his eyes for thirty seconds after he'd said that. Then she ran over to Boots and said, "Red wants to get some sleep in El Paso tonight and I told him he could stay over at our place," and Boots looked at Red and then back at Kay. "Why that's swell," she said, "Georgie's going to stay too." Red and Georgie caught each other's eye for a second, they were in complete understanding. They went back together for their handbags but neither of them said anything.

They got themselves and all the luggage into a taxi and drove out through town and stopped on a dark street on the outskirts.

They all waited for Red while he paid the driver and then there was the business of opening the front door.

The apartment was on the first floor and it was a pretty swell place, with

real low plain furniture like nothing Red had ever seen before. He was almost afraid to move it was so nice, and only sat down after Kay had told him to a couple times.

"Wait, I'll go out and get us all a drink," Kay said, and Red saw how small and nicely built she was from the rear.

Red and Georgie sat on the couch and the two babes sat in separate chairs, and they drank the tom collins and Kay talked about how *horrible* trains were and how she always *swore* she'd never take another trip, but then when the time came she always *did* anyway. She had a scratch on her suntanned leg and while she leaned over and examined it she explained how she'd got it when she'd slipped stepping into the train in Los Angeles. Red felt like getting down and examining it too.

But while she was talking Red suddenly had a funny feeling, he thought of those five-line notes his mom wrote him, that last one he could see as if it were right there in front of him: "Well son we're sure glad all about your furlo . . ." That was the one with the twenty one-dollar bills in it. He'd already spent two of them on the cab. He thought of his old man too, a tall skinny fellow who never said much, just worked hard all day in the field. He remembered that funny look, as if he were going to cry, on his old man's face the day he'd left eleven months ago. Now look at me, Red thought.

Kay was standing up, pushing her arms above her head and yawning, a position that sure made her figure stand out.

"I'm *dead*," she was saying, "simply *dead*. I'm going to get in the tub and just *soak*. I'm *dead* and *filthy*. . . . That couch opens up, darlings. You two can sleep there snug as bugs."

Red just sat there and looked at her. She looked down at him and smiled. "And remember what I said to *you*, Mr. Red, about being *good*." She came over and kissed him on the cheek and smoothed his hair. "HmMMM?" she said.

Red couldn't get up enough nerve to reach out and pull her down to him. He didn't know what to think about her. He couldn't make out where she got all the dough to keep this big apartment even. He watched which of the two bedrooms she went into, though.

He and the sailor lay there in the dark on the couch for twenty minutes.

"I never did get home on a leave yet," the sailor said. "I tried about three other times but I never do. I always get into something like this. It ain't bad though. They got a good setup. Boots says she works in an office, and Kay just lives off some rich guy she's divorced from. It ain't a bad setup eh?"

"Looks pretty good," Red said.

They lay there for ten minutes longer, then the sailor said, "Well I know what I'm gonna do," and jumped out of bed.

"Where you goin'?" Red said, looking up into the dark.

"I ain't goin to play tiddlywinks, soldier," the sailor's voice came back, already halfway across the room.

Then Red heard the door open and close, and Boots' voice saying "Oh, no—" and then a little scuffle and he heard her giggling.

Well I'll be damn, Red thought. He lay there a minute with his heart pounding.

Then he got out of bed and went in his bare feet across the room to Kay's door.

He listened for a while outside. He couldn't hear a sound above the pounding of his heart. He reached out and turned the doorknob and pushed.

It opened!

He stood there his heart making twenty foot leaps trying to get out of his throat.

Then he took three steps into the room.

In the bed she stirred.

"Is that you, Red?" she said.

He went on over to the bed.

"Yeah," he said.

He got into bed and knelt right above her.

"But Red, you promised you'd be *good*," she said.

He couldn't think of anything to say so he grabbed her and kissed her. For a minute she tried to push him away and talk with his mouth on hers, but then suddenly she stopped and put her arms around him.

This is the part they always leave out of the movies, Red thought.

It was such a damn thing to think he wanted to laugh right there.

When he woke up nobody was in the bed with him and he lay for a moment trying to remember everything that happened and not feeling very good about anything. He ought to be on the train, he thought. He ought to be on the train on his way to Elder, home.

Then he saw her. She was standing in front of the mirror combing her hair. It made his heart stop very still for four or five hours, looking at her back like that.

She turned around and for a moment stood there with a blank early-morning look on her face. Then her face came all together and she gave him that quick crinkle-eyed smile. "How *are* you this morning?" she said, coming over to the bed.

My God she was lovely and put together, Red thought. She was little but she was sure put together. It made him want to cry almost, to look at a woman like her.

She was standing there smiling down at him kind of mysteriously and

he realized all of a sudden, he hadn't answered her question. How was he this morning? "I feel swell," he said.

"You know you're going to the bullfight with me this afternoon, don't you darling?" she said, sitting down on the bed. "Now don't muss my hair!"

So Red got dressed and they went out to the kitchen and she sure looked swell sitting across the breakfast table from him, in that flowered dressing gown, her little sharp face sort of turned to one side smiling and talking to him. He couldn't take his eyes from her.

"You know . . . I like you a lot," Red said.

"Want some more toast, darling?" she answered.

"I never thought I had a chance with you on the train," Red said.

"I *told* you to be good last night," she said. "And you just wouldn't."

"I think you're really . . . really a swell girl," Red said.

She didn't seem so old to him now. Everything he was saying just slipped out, he just listened to it and it didn't sound like him speaking at all.

"I guess you got lots of guys crazy about you," he said. "But I could really go for you."

"Oh you'll go home to that little girl in Tennessee and forget *all* about me," she said. "You won't even remember the color of my *eyes*, darling."

"They're blue," Red said automatically. He hadn't really noticed the color before and he felt a little ashamed.

She was standing by the sink, rinsing the cups. Red went over and grabbed her rather clumsily and tried to kiss her. The look that came over her face startled him, she was really mad. "Go *away*," she said. "Can't you see I'm *busy*?"

"I'm sorry," Red said, and got the towel and began drying the dishes.

And then Georgie and Boots came out, they were both fully dressed and giggling about something.

So Red sat in the front room and read the Sunday funnies while they ate, and Kay filed her nails and talked about how terribly *boring* she found Sundays, and if it weren't for the bullfights she didn't know *what* she'd do. She got *so* tired of movies. It was one of the reasons she travelled so much, she said.

Red couldn't help stealing glances at her all the time, she was so pretty sitting over there. And he felt that sick lonely feeling inside and he didn't know what to do about it.

Walking along beside her in Juarez he felt very proud of himself, and kept looking at her sidewise.

He still couldn't believe a woman like her would really have a guy like

him. He felt proud of her, prancing along in her oxfords and her bright green plaid suit—and he thought, looking at the couple ahead, Georgie sure got the short end of the bargain this time. Even though Boots did keep throwing her arms around his neck and laughing at him with her big teeth.

"There's the bull ring!" Kay said and Red looked and there it was, the dirty white curved front of the bull ring. He felt desperate.

"Let's not go to the bullfight, Kay," he said.

She turned to him with a little crease between her eyes. "Why darling what do you *mean*?" she said.

For a couple steps he didn't say anything, he just felt all hot and there was a pounding in his head.

"It's just—" he said, "it's just that I'm pretty crazy about you that's all. I don't think you know how crazy I am about you, Kay." He was looking straight ahead with a blank scared expression on his face. He felt his mind running wild, he didn't know what he was saying but he was going to say it all without looking at her, just as he wanted to say it. "I wish we could ditch Georgie and Boots and go somewhere and just be alone together. Even in a restaurant. And just talk. God, Kay," he said, "I'm crazier about you than I've ever—"

"Why *Harry*!" Kay screamed.

It scared Red so he jumped and turned still whiter. She was running wildly across the street to a tall middleaged fellow in a salt-and-pepper suit. He stood there watching them talking with big smiles, holding hands.

In a minute she came rushing back across the street to him. Georgie and Boots had stopped, waiting to see what was going to happen.

"Do you mind *awfully*, Red?" Kay said.

"Mind what?" Red said.

"Oh I haven't seen Harry in *so* long and he wants me to go have a drink with him. Do you mind?"

"No," Red said.

"You go on with Georgie and Boots and we'll meet you at the fight."

"O.k.," Red said.

He watched her run across the street.

He felt rotten all the way through to the bottoms of his feet.

Georgie and Boots came over to him.

"Oh she's just that way, don't pay any attention to her," Boots said.

"Yeah," Red said.

"Come along, Red," Boots said taking his arm.

He looked at her and suddenly he liked her. He hadn't liked her very much before. But now she didn't seem so ugly and loud.

He went along with them. They waited in line and got the tickets and then they went up to a cafe and had a drink. It would be an hour till the bullfight started.

Boots tried to be gay but pretty soon even she got quiet and the three of them just stared at the people all around them. There was a little excitement over in the corner because a Mexican kid was trying to sell a drunken American soldier a banderilla which had dried blood and the heavy hairs of the bull on it. The kid was giving his sales talk plenty of punch by pretending he was inserting the banderilla. He was using the table top for the bull's hump. The drunken soldier finally jerked off the tablecloth and pretended he was a bullfighter and a bull both at once. He ran all around the room making faces and imitating the bull with snorts and stomps and waving the cloth.

"You think we'll see Kay at the fight?" Red said.

"Sure," Boots said. "We'll look for her. Maybe you can sit with her."

"Yeah," Red said. He finished the tequilla collins with one gulp. He suddenly felt like walking out of the cafe and taking the first train east. But somehow he couldn't pull himself together. He couldn't understand how Kay could be so swell to him and then just run away like that.

They went to the bullfight and Red kept looking all around but he couldn't see her. Everybody yelled and screamed when the bullfighter had to run and hide from the bull. There were a lot of Americans at the fight and they were all pulling for the bull. They all booed when one of the bullfighters tried to sneak up behind the bull and jab him. Red didn't want to look at the fight. He felt lousy. He wanted to get out of there.

The three of them ate supper together in an El Paso restaurant. Red couldn't eat all of his steak. He just sat there looking out of the window. The little big-eyed waitress took a shine to him and acted almost hurt that he didn't eat but he was feeling rotten. All he wanted to do was stare out the window at the sign across the street. It went off and on forever, saying, LOANS.

"I guess I ought to be moving on," he said when the three of them got back to the apartment and Kay wasn't there.

"Hell, you can't go without saying goodbye to Kay," Georgie said.

"I ought to be going on though," Red said. "I told my folks I was coming."

They sat in the living room. Georgie and Boots sat over on the couch together. He was fooling around showing her how to tie all kinds of knots with her hanky. She'd giggle and just look at his face instead of at the knots.

Red got the idea and said, "I think I'll go out and walk around."

He walked around the dark streets of that town. A dog barked at him

and he didn't say a thing. When he got back to the apartment Georgie and Boots weren't around.

He lay down on the couch and closed his eyes. He didn't know how long he slept but when he opened his eyes there was Kay standing over him.

"Hello, darling," Kay said.

He got up and rubbed his eyes like a little kid.

"But you've been *sleeping* and you've forgotten all *about* me darling," she said.

Her hair was mussed. Now for the first time he saw she was drunk.

"Naw," he said.

She sat down on his knee and ran her fingers through his hair. "You've forgotten all about little me," she said.

He tried to say something, but she kissed him so hard on the mouth he had to stop. He kissed her back. He tightened his hold on her little body.

"Oh, Red," she said, lying back in his arms and giggling up at him, "you sure do things to me."

He didn't know what to say. All of a sudden, looking down at her like that, he began to bawl. He tried to stop himself but couldn't.

She laughed and got his handkerchief out of his pocket and dabbed at the tears. He felt ashamed of crying.

"I never did that before," he said, when he got himself in gear again.

She just laughed.

"Your hands are cold," he said. "Are you cold?"

She just laughed. "You're *sweet*," she said, and shoved her cold hand into his shirt so he jumped.

God she was nice when she was like this. He'd never known a girl as nice as she was. He forgave her for running off. He forgave her for everything.

He wanted suddenly to ask her who Harry was but he couldn't bring himself to.

She's pretty pie-eyed, he thought. God, she's nice.

Suddenly she jumped up. "Oh come *on* you old Red," she said, standing there swaying a little. "I thought you were a great big *strong* man tonight. Come on and *catch* me!"

And she took off into the kitchen and he ran after her. She ran around the table giggling and taunting him and she knocked over a chair. She came into the living room again, knocked over a lamp, giggled still more and finally ran into her bedroom and locked the door.

Red stood by the locked door and could hear her laughing in there. He felt all excited and he was breathing hard.

"Let me in Kay," he said.

She didn't answer.

"Please let me in."

He couldn't hear her at all now. He waited perhaps ten minutes, then he knocked timidly. She didn't make any sound. He knocked louder. Still no answer.

He waited a long while outside her door. Gradually his heart calmed down and he went over and sat down on the couch.

He sat there for half the night just looking at the design in the rug. He didn't think of anything at all.

She woke him up next morning.

"Is it late?" he said. She was wearing her flowered dressing gown. She looked at him with her little smile.

"Did you sleep well, darling?" she said.

She even buttered his toast for him at the breakfast table. Why in hell was she so kind to him, he wondered. He kept looking at her as if he would find the answer in her face.

"I was a little high last night" she said. "I hope I didn't seem *too* silly."

"No," he said. "You were swell. I don't mind anything you do."

She looked up and stared at him a long time. A smile lingered around her mouth. "You don't?" she said.

"Ah Kay," he said.

But now, looking at her, he remembered that he was really supposed to be getting home about now. He felt the 30-30 shell he was bringing for his brother Jack.

She saw him and said, "What have you got there? Secrets?"

He took out the shell. "I was just bringing it home for my brother," he said. "He wrote and said for me to."

"You have a *brother*?" she said. "Red-head like you?"

"Yeah," he said. "He's only fifteen. He's crazy about guns and hunting. I used to hunt some too."

"Like what?" she said, her eyebrows arched up. And she reached out and took his hand.

"Oh . . . like rabbits . . . and squirrels—" But she was smiling at him in such a peculiar way and squeezing his hand that his voice trailed off. His heart began to beat hard. God she was pretty.

"You're a nice kid," she said with her little smile. And then she got up and made him put his arm around her. Like that she led him into the bedroom and closed the door.

She turned around and looked up at him. "Undress me," she said. "Do *everything* for me."

He didn't say a word. He did what she said.

In the afternoon they went to a movie that had Cary Grant and Kay said she just *loved* Cary Grant. When they got back to the apartment Georgie

and Boots were just going out. Georgie looked pretty worn out but Boots was still wearing her big toothy smile.

"I feel almost ashamed of myself going out for breakfast this time of day," she said to Kay, and Kay said, "I'd *think* so."

When they were inside she said, "I've *got* to leave you alone tonight, darling. You don't *mind*, do you?"

"No," Red said.

She gave his hand a squeeze, ran off and took a shower, and came out looking wonderful in a simple black dress with a high collar that made her look like a queen or something.

He read magazines all evening. He kept wondering where she was. He felt angry but at the same time he didn't know what to do about it. Once he went into her room and stood there in the darkness, wishing she would come in and be with him.

He had never felt this way before.

And then he went back and read more magazines. He read the jokes in "Esquire" and then he read all about Errol Flynn's newest yachting trip with a girl who was at two different places in the articles reported as fifteen and nineteen years old.

But he was always finding himself staring off at the wall.

He heard himself saying, "I ought to go home. I really ought to go home. My old man would be mad as hell if he knew I was here like this."

He didn't have but \$5.95 left.

"I'll never get to Elder Tennessee," he thought. "I got to start now, get out of here now or I'll never get there."

He stood up. For a single moment he was going.

Then he thought of Kay and sat down again.

When he woke up it was morning.

Georgie and Boots were eating breakfast in the kitchen. Boots told him that Kay had gone out early. "She had to meet somebody," Boots said. "She didn't know when she'd be back."

He drank some orange juice.

He was glad he didn't have to think of anything to say. Those two were all interested in themselves.

He went into the living room and stood in the middle of the room.

If I went home now he thought, I could still make it. I could still make it for a couple of days and have time to get back.

He went out at noon. He went across the line and took in the whole line of bars down the main street.

He got so drunk that first he wanted to fight and he struck out wildly at

a big soldier with two girls standing next to him in the Chicago Club. Without even being hit he went full length on the floor and when he woke up he was in the gutter out on the street and it was night. He got up and made his way to the International Bridge.

The whole side of his face was covered with blood but the M.P. at the soldier's gate didn't say anything.

He had to ring the apartment door bell for fifteen minutes before Georgie came and let him in. Georgie had on one of Boots' kimonos.

It was dark in the room so Georgie didn't see what a hell of a shape Red was in. Georgie was mad at having to get out of bed anyhow, and didn't feel much like talking.

Red tried to wash the blood off. He took off his shirt and pants and went to sleep on the couch.

When he woke up the next morning his mouth was swollen big and he noticed he had one tooth broken off. He looked at his face in the mirror and it was all on one side. He almost laughed at himself.

He took a shower and felt better.

He looked in his pockets. He didn't have any money at all.

He found his furlough-rate train ticket and looked at it.

In his pants pocket he found a woman's handkerchief with lip-rouge on it. He tried to remember where he'd got it yesterday but he couldn't remember anything.

"I'm no good at all," he thought, sitting in the living room, looking straight ahead.

"I'm not worth anything. I don't even deserve to get home."

He was hungry but there was nothing in the kitchen except some bread.

"I hope to hell I never get home now," he thought. He went over and stared out of the window. There was nothing down on the street to look at.

In the other room he noticed that Kay's bedroom door was open so he went over and looked in. The bed hadn't been slept in.

So he got his suitcase and put on his hat and went out the door.

"I don't deserve to get home," he said again. "I am just about the lowest kind of heel that ever lived. They've got the kids up at the station every day watching for me."

Out on the street, walking fast, he realized for the first time that he was out of the apartment and he felt suddenly free. He hadn't known how wonderful it would feel, being free of that apartment.

He began almost to run up the street, he felt so glad, and in no time at all he was at the railroad station.

"By God I'm going to make it," he thought. "By God I'll get home after all."

He ran up to the first train official he saw and said, "Where's the New Orleans train?"

The paunchy official took out his watch and stared at it a long time as if considering, then looked up and said, "It's just now leaving. If you run you can still make it. Got your ticket?"

Red ran out onto the platform and saw the train ready to pull out. One door was open and he leaped on and then the train started.

"I'm on the damn thing!" he kept telling himself. "By God, I'm really on the damn thing!"

He pushed on up into the car, shoved his grip on the rack, and sat down puffing. Next to him was a man with a detective story magazine. The man said something to Red but Red didn't want to talk to anybody. All he wanted to do was sit here and let this old train take him home. He didn't want to meet anybody or know anybody till he got there.

He dozed off there in the train seat and the conductor had to wake him to get his ticket.

The conductor looked at Red's ticket and then looked at Red.

"I must look funny," Red thought, "with this swollen jaw."

"Where you going, soldier?" the conductor said.

"I'm goin to Elder Tennessee," Red said.

A little sarcastic smile flitted over the conductor's face. He looked around at several other passengers, as if to enjoy the joke with them.

"Well you're sure going a funny way to get to New Orleans," the conductor said. "This train is bound for Los Angeles."

Red just sat there and looked at the conductor. The conductor meanwhile was punching the detective-story fan's ticket.

"I can fix it so you can get off at the next stop and catch the train going the other way," the conductor said.

"When is the next train?"

The conductor looked at his watch. "The next train is at 12:30 tomorrow morning."

Red began to figure quickly.

If this were the right train, he thought, I would have one day at home. But this isn't the right train and I won't have any days at home so there's no sense getting off.

"I'll just go on this way," Red said.

The conductor punched his ticket, gave him part of it back, and went on up the aisle.

He sat there for a long time just looking out of the train window but not seeing anything. He felt the 30-30 shell in his pocket.

"I can mail it to him," he thought.

LOWRY

He went out on the platform after a while and there were a bunch of other soldiers out there and they gave him a drink from their bottle.

"Just coming back from a furlough?" one fat soldier with a great mop of black hair said.

"Yeah," Red said. He turned his face away so they wouldn't see him.

(Reprinted from *The Rocky Mountain Review*)

LIFE'S OTHER KINGDOM

DAVID T. BAZELON

A SMALL BOY waits uneasily at the entrance to his own dream. His pale face points toward the ephemeral duskiess of the dream's interior, and he tries to smile at its gray-blue, gelatin-like artificiality. But grinning at the shining, indistinct union of morning mist and midnight blackness hurts his eyes, like break of sleep—the first sight of morning—and he closes them. Eyes open or shut, the vision of his own dream persists. (As when at night-time he would stare at the black wall next to his bed, the same wall that all day long would be covered with red and pink flowers in orderly pattern, and he would be afraid because there was no certain knowledge when his eyelids were down and when up.)

Then without experiencing the feeling of movement, he enters the compass of the dream, becoming involved in its mass. Its first touch is that of a forgotten enemy. Out of the shimmering, amorphous background, a wooden building slowly takes shape. It is ancient, wormeaten and woeful. The front of the structure (only this is seen, since the edges fade away into the surrounding depths of the dream) is covered with scales of blackened, crumbling paint: like the bones of an old, old man, the wood beneath is brittle or, already to the other side of decay, the wood is fallen to dust. The building is styled like a fat and sedate grandfather, but also dry and wrinkled: old-fashioned, apparently useless, but held together by some inner pattern of meaning. The boy's companion now appears and courageously takes the lead in approaching this portentous structure. While the companion seems to progress under his own volition, the little boy who belongs to the dream moves only at the dream's command; and not by his own muscles, but by a peculiar strength in certain of the objects he conceives.

As the boys and the building come closer together, everything suddenly darkens. A rickety ladder rises up clearly along the wooden wall. It is made of scrapwood, poorly patched together. They are standing next to it, waiting uncertainly: a moment of decision ensues.

—The dream undergoes a slight tremor (the beginnings of dissolution, like heat-waves) but is soon steadied. Resettled, it then continues.

Smiling, the companion turns and silently makes known the necessity of mounting the ladder. His grinning lips pronounce with untoward superiority his willingness, even desire, to meet this necessity. At these gestures, a sharp confusion breaks out within the other little boy, the one who belongs to the dream: he is goaded by his companion in the present, but also he has a premonition of the futures to be met with in the house.

His confusion, however, only augments the other's sneering superiority, which becomes a light ahead of and above him. Bravely he looks into this light; but, suffering anger and helplessness, he must avert his eyes. Greasing his will with this victory, as he might dust his hands with rosin, the companion is prepared and so proceeds to climb the ladder.

The little boy whose dream it is nevertheless follows. Slowly ascending the patchwork ladder, he feels himself rising to a preordained junction with an ominous and terrible event. Still climbing, he glances up at that part of the dream which is now a midnight sky; and he shudders at the sight of such a false and overpowering moon—an evil circle, brilliantly white. His thigh only just misses being torn by a nail jutting out from the ladder: the nail's point and length gleam sharply in reflecting the moonlight. An ancient piece of wood, which serves as a rung of the ladder, suddenly cracks and breaks away under the pressure of his companion's foot. Falling, it rushes close by the boy's head. Then his fright moves up the ladder more quickly than he himself does: though his fear never leaves him, he meets it increasingly as he ascends: the two halves of his terror smash together at each successive rung.

As the board gives way under his foot, the companion quickly catches himself; he then scrambles up the several remaining rungs, and disappears through a small trapdoor into which the ladder leads. A landing, closed in like a hut, sits at the top of the ladder and is entered through the trapdoor. Surprisingly, this landing has no contiguity with the side of the building. When the little boy of the dream reaches the broken rung of the ladder, the companion has already vanished through the tiny manhole of the trapdoor. His heart twitches sickeningly; almost he grows too weak to keep his hold on the ladder. Then, frightened at the possibilities of this weakness, he clutches the frame of the ladder with all his might. (The dreamer's body becomes as taut as a harp-string.) This prevents him from moving: he loosens his grip: makes the effort to bridge the open space.

He succeeds, but gains no satisfaction. He trembles. Now everything begins to frighten him. He senses terror in the trapdoor opening, in the gap behind him, *in himself*. But he braces to the necessity, plunges through the trapdoor. As he enters its darkness, a second rung breaks off. Then all of the ladder falls noiselessly away, disappearing. He is left stranded in the small hut's dim interior, searching for his companion.

Nothing lies behind him: he feels this void strongly in acute flashes of sensation. And his slightest movement causes the planks of the platform to creak; even an intake of breath seems to release a rumble of dusty, powerful protest. Simply from the presence of the oppressive darkness he is offered the knowledge that his companion has disappeared forever. The moment he learns this, he perceives a dull glow announcing the path that

will lead him off the enclosed landing. He moves closer to the doorway, as if pulled by the shadow-light which has framed itself there.

From the door he sees the ladder stretching outward almost horizontally. Its rungs seem insecure indeed, and to proceed on it at that angle would be like venturing upon a tightrope strung by an apathetic amateur: the way, then, is no longer easily up, but now straight into things. The slabs of wood that rib the ladder's frame are visibly enfeebled by time, human-worn. The moon, a circle of day in the sky, bathes the ladder in its weak brilliance. But the moonlight is more than defeated by the thick, surrounding darkness: it merely accentuates the night.

In the bitter rear of his mouth he receives the taste of his own fear.

The ladder proffers an invitation that cannot be declined. (Compelling him forward, the dream presents irrevocable necessities, and directions not to be questioned.) Suddenly and with peculiar clarity, it strikes him that the beckoning ladder before him is the same that vanished behind him. He is certain that his former companion is safely away.

Crawling on all fours, clinging to the ladder as a falling man might clutch at his own clothing, the little boy inches his way along the nearly horizontal ladder. He moves in a hypnotic daze induced by the dream's unwelcome but compelling necessity—necessity like a barren isle in a lake of turbulent terror. Looking ahead (as Lot's wife glanced back), he discovers that the ladder is pointed toward a meeting with the wooden building, toward an apex in its wall: situated as an isolated apex. This is similar to the loft of a barn.

As he nears the end of the scrapwood ladder, approaching the cavernous opening to the loft, a board suddenly creaks, destroying the silence: the pounding of his heart mounts like a drummer's crescendo. The sound is infinitely hollow; and it has the intensity, almost the madness, a sound would have in limitless space and unpunctuated time. He enters the looming night of the loft and the terror within him begins to throb and pulse like a boiling lymphatic liquid in rhythm with his hastening heartbeats.

Once in the loft, it is as if there had never been an entrance . . . and would never be an exit. Its deeply outstretching darkness has the tone and texture of death's blackness. Yet the child of the dream can see dimly certain vague shapes and groupings in its interior. But above all he sees horror, even in each particle of dust; in the seeming immensity of the place under the vaulted, rotund roof; in all, a huge, amphitheatrical hollowness. He sees because at a distant end of the attic-like place is a bright, indefinite light, not fixed anywhere or to anything, nor simply floating, but an unsettled glow even less than darkness, and more terrifying. (He would soon discover that the thick shadow in which he feels buried moves with his movements, that the unsettled light maintains its distant opposition

to the darkness, and travels—as if with the quality of sound—silently: like one's reflection in a store-window on a sidestreet at night.)

The center of the room is less encumbered than the periphery, where material of common as well as strange character lies in loose, dim heaps. But all of it is old and useless, only this: an undergrowth of worn, discarded objects. At once upon viewing the motionless but complex interior of the loft (which occurs in a matter of seconds), the small boy belonging to the dream *senses directly the Presence of the Danger of a Man*. Intimate, indefinite, irrevocable.

. . . *terrifying*.

As he begins to run, the boy catches (he believes he catches) a sight of the Man . . . wearing the black old-fashioned suit of a country spell-binder or preacher, or an undertaker, who is tall and moves effortlessly, with careful certainty, whose visage is vengeance: withered, hard, brilliant.

Running into the objects in the loft, touching them, being scraped by them, only the huge inexorable fear prevents him from being made sick by his contact with the thick layers of dust and dirt—congealed like dried grease—which cover everything. Proximity to this weird mess intensifies his response away from the present. Like a snapped spring, veering and vibrating crazily in the *free* air, he runs more wildly.

He runs fiercely, obsessed by the thunderously conclusive pursuit of the Man. Or the Presence of His Danger. And always the shadow encloses him, always the light preserves its fleeting opposition. Now all his nerves are united with the great fear that crawls on the underside of nights and dreams.

He runs. But it is merely running. There is nowhere to go. Even with all the blinding fear and terror, this is underlined quite clearly: *there is nowhere to go*. And he has not the slightest suspicion there might be. He simply runs.

And running, he becomes enmeshed in the heaped material that crowds the attic. He stumbles over *old implements*: broken or discarded, thoroughly useless things and pieces of things which once were closely involved in human living. Awry, rusty bedsprings. Over-large cartons holding perhaps a single metal vase, dusty, tarnished and bent—or a squat, ornate centerpiece wrapped in yellow newsprint. An old cracked shoe, a piece of dried dung adhering to the sole. The cane seat of a chair, its back missing, the legs broken and out of joint. A torn sock, the ragged sleeve of a shirt. A huge beetle, its legs to the air, belly decaying.—He struggles against all of these in a headlong lunge through fear into fear even more enveloping.

Suddenly the skin of his body cries sharply to him that the Presence of the Danger of a Man is very much closer, nearly upon him. *He feels a suffocating intimacy*. All in the world that concerns him grows rapidly big

with the terror he breathes on it—like the expansion of a toy balloon as the main resistance of the tight, new rubber is overcome, his terror expands infinitely.

Then the child stops running, looks agonizingly to where God should have been, and screams.

HANGING ON A NAIL

DAVID CORNEL DEJONG

IT WAS AT times like this that you longed to hear that bluejay again, shouting: "Nosegay" in its own peculiarly insinuating manner, perhaps immediately after it had snatched the empty shell of a cicada away. Because now you were that cicada shell, longing for something alive and impudent to pick you off. And then to scold the wide, bland empty day for it. Instead you were simply hanging on a nail, one of Mary's many nails, left behind in the house with Mary's teeth, her aura and her general intruding aftermath. Certainly you hadn't wanted to preserve those teeth; and whatever distorted sentiments had led up to their being saved instead of being planted upon the dead-white gums, you would have none of it. You had never been a sentimentalist. A harried man, yes. But a thinking man, too. And now you seldom used anything but memories and nostalgia for thinking cud; those feeble gasses of your erstwhile mind.

Actually you hung there dried-up and waiting. No longer subtle enough to imagine that you could put your head between your knees, clamp your knees together and let the skull pop open to let the old sentimental brains ooze out like so much toothpaste. Had Mary talked you dry? She had, they said. They, those flitting-weasel vagaries which used to catch you off guard behind the woodshed, under the bridge, or when simply pulling milk out of a cow's teat. Or those nagging mosquitoes of memories told you. So you perked your wizened ears dutifully to hear Mary speaking up again. And invariably, having said her final platitude of the day, she'd take her teeth out and put them into the jar with salt water and just a dash of soda. Or in the old ornamental mustache cup, which seemed to be saying gothic: "Father," even to the teeth inside. And now they were left behind, on the insistence of the children, so that they could keep a finger on your conscience and speak up, when . . .

When you were still pliant, inquisitive and wholesome you should have followed Mary's words to their utter conclusion; should have stepped on them as on the wobbly pickets of a fence, eventually falling, of course, and be impaled, and so rid of Mary, as it were on her own terms. The logical end of man, the obliteration of what was supposed to be one's male integrity. Ah, and the spectacle! How all the little sadistic children would have come running up to stand around you, licking at their raspberry lollypops, loving the bloody spectacle into which you had disintegrated. For the community it would have been just as effective as the final white-wash of the Calvinistic church, before Doctrine, Creed and Destiny had

walked down the aisle, removed their oilcloth vizored caps, spat out their wads of tobacco, and tackled God's reflection in a mirror, which wouldn't have been there in the church at all, but for some discursive Dutch theologian who interpreted Calvin in a supralapsarian fashion after the turn of the century.

Now, and not only when you were actually confused with the times and its upheavals, but even when you were blandly sane at mid-day, Mary would suggest things from the cup. "Couldn't you sneak out and be seduced a little," she'd say in a sort of old pewter voice. "Just a little, up to the knees, say? And get it out of your system, even this late, say. And pretend you're still a man, say."

Under the sun, such suggestions merely became slight flaws you'd observed in the linoleum pattern. Or you could leave them hanging on another one of Mary's many nails behind the kitchen stove, the nails on which she'd always hang something raggy or scorched. In public, of course, it was no more serviceable than a gilded frame through which you looked at the sun, and saw it exactly like it was without a frame, even sometimes like the sun who'd been your companion in your youth. "Moreover," Mary added (and now you were way back where you started from, in that first ubiquitous cottage where you were supposed to be breakfasting on love like any old kippers), stitch by stitch, one potato eye dug out after another, "Mother always told me there is much to be covered with a clean apron. As I told you . . ." The 'you' left it all with you, all by yourself, still un-nuptial as it were, like a pretty dubious antique, which you were supposed to put up at auction. So you'd have occasion to say: "Gents, the legs are a bit wobbly, the posterns a bit cracked, but she won three races in her day over as many furlongs and through deep Mississippi mud," invariably mixing up things, as Mary said you would.

Mary's teeth simply keep talking to you from the mug. They sometimes make salty comments about the weather, as if being disassociated from Mary they get slightly inebriated and considerably more fey watching me with my one cup of ale. Cups, because the children, those delights, don't want it to be rumored you sip things from glasses. So of late Mary's teeth simply go to the back door to let the cat out, when the day is done. And Mary's head standing on top of the dresser, has been parlaying a bride's smile with a virgin's stare, achieving exactly nothing, except a sort of bereavement. Naturally, there can be no compromise in a parlay; either both horses win, or . . .

Well, and so Mary's ribs, shoulders and elbows are folding the bedspread back again. It was real candle-wick, with a birthday candle on each tuft, burning sometimes like Rome as seen from a heroic Bruno Mussolini height. When Mary's hair started to burn, she walked out of the room, dancing

clumsily ahead of her scorching smells. To pour bacon fat on it; to suspect it was your fault; to flush the toilet to deaden the subsequent sounds; and, about that time, to hemorrhage her mind dry over the awful things the kids had said about old Starkey's balls hanging low.

"Leave them alone," you'd suggested. "Which?" she'd snarled. But it had precipitated the crisis. Since that time you'd known that each of you would simply sit each on a side of the same river, each fishing for the same bass, which had been caught and fried weeks ago.

And so it came about that, illogically, she'd started calling fish loquats, or figs. Making of them nothing finny or scaly, nothing fish at all, not even goldfish. But that didn't matter when Mary kept pushing the three kids back into her womb again, all for herself. You knew then that you'd found all three under some burdock leaves, and you might as well put them back where you'd found them and keep your thoughts clean until they were properly dusted and oiled and doped with little squirts of paregoric. Even though every one had his little mind, minds like crooked little balls which somehow would never add up to the top scores on the old pinball machine. The Germans did it better, you'd decided, cauterizing and bemeaning the age. Still, even then you couldn't apply hot punk to them to see if under drastic pressure they'd flare up and sputter, and maybe . . . Because then you couldn't put them back into the little box again and sell them. "Priorities," Mary would say, with her red empty gums as lively as clamworms falling from a spade. "You can't tell me different," she'd add as if she were adding a little dash of soda to keep cooked peas looking green. Later you sat down repentantly to a meal of Nestlé's Baby Food, with meatballs à la Rector on the side, as if you were doing some bootlegging.

No, she wouldn't tolerate radio jazz because Frederic, Fredericus and Frederica had had mumps last time the radio had played jazz. She couldn't name a cut of meat or a brand of coffee that hadn't had the germs of the kids' diseases in them. Some fine diseases, too. One that sat in a cage and whistled the first three bars of "Over There" as well as any minah bird. But that reminded her of George Cohan, and he wasn't of the right faith. The right faith went among other things into hooked rugs with tiger lilies and pansy leaves, so you couldn't walk on it until it faded and tore and became functional. Then she put it in a mop and cleaned the rectory with it for the new pastor, who had only one kidney, and a bottle for the other, and who made you sing three hymns in the middle of his sermon, so that he could go out and: BE WITH HIMSELF.

And all the damned little sponges she eternally tacked around the room. Each with its drop of olive oil, to catch the smells; some of them would most miraculously collect perfumes, to be squeezed out into vials for the

Armenians, the erstwhile favorites. "You're the pater-familias," she could also say daintily, when her face was window-dressed with the brightest articles of her personality. My, how that serenaded you right back where you came from, this: "Wouldn't spit on your mother's parlor floor would you, William. Now then . . ." But you kept making little chain-links from your mistakes, and later they'd turn up in the humidior, behind the piano or in one of the kids' tonsils.

"Disdainfully, yet somehow voluptuously she bent over her pellucid, iridescent, shell-pink knees and started licking them, staining them first with her Whore Of Babylon lipstick. Later the blood would start running from the little railroad tunnels her teeth were digging, and then the knees wasted with most unsightly gangrene, and such is the inevitable reward of evil." Mary could read it as if her words wore flannel night shirts from the 1914 Sears Roebuck catalogue. It was uncanny, and shameless, perhaps, because the shirts had only one dimension, and no backs to them at all. But it wasn't till the twentieth year that I'd realized that no one had ever looked at Mary's back. By that time lots of people had strung radio wires from it, mistakenly perhaps.

But then you only admitted it when the psychoanalyst laid you out on an undertaker's sofa and filled your old vagaries with preservatives, so that you could take them to at least twenty country fairs and perhaps win blue ribbons with them. It was all because you professed to be a conscientious objector to the way the universe was directed. "Could I regale you with further untoward ecstasies," you'd blithely suggested. But where his opiate smile had been, merely three inches beneath the opiate eyes sitting under the parasol eyeglasses, there was only the wallpaper with its vines and tendrils. Well, you climbed down those and landed with your feet on solid earth again, and watched ants, ant lions, ant wasps, and all the fine old gobbling story of life you thought you'd have to put away in a pickle jar.

And next that winter! How it snowed! It snowed Mary under, and Frederic and Fredericus and Frederica, and you felt free to join the navy, be a hero in blue, be a gob, a tar, in fact, be considerably plural in all your actions and responsibilities, now that your conscientious objections were all flushed away. But the snow melted and you couldn't have fun with living, squealing hunks of muscle and hair, that had better been carcasses. Mary, like a fumigating candle fresh from the drugstore, started killing off all the new germs and bugs, and even the pet white mouse you kept hidden in the old wire bread-toaster which the Swedish washwoman coveted. Must admit, that on the occasion she acted as if she knew: "A man's gotta have rhythm, gotta have love, gotta have music, can't live without it." But she made a lush issue of it, especially Sundays. As chastisement

she cooked cabbage and frankfurters on that day. It was after that meal that the bluejay screamed: "Nosegay" and you knew this purported a final unbuttoning, or almost . . .

It was. She died of it in a fine frame of mind, just past fifty-eight, fairly stilted on varicosed veins and with a cyst in nearly all her organs, especially the more exclusive ones. The kids would gladly die of it, too, in sheer understanding and sympathy, you gathered from their swimming-drowning blue eyes. It was a fine funeral they staged, straight over a path with white oyster shells and blue mussel shells and tented with a lot of doctrines quilted together out of serious books.

It hadn't taken so long after all, you rapid-calculated. Now being merely fifty-nine, you could still play checkers and tell the world what was wrong with old Cordell Hull.

Frederic, Fredericus and Frederica padded about on the soft balls of their feet, and walked with their knees daintily inward as if they'd never heard of sin. They said: "Pappa, Pappa," and you could tell that they'd had the word all polished up like their new Pontiacs. Parading to the funeral they hung their shirt tails out, just to prove they'd never dirtied them. And Frederica exhibited her expensive cough as if she expected the preacher to put an engagement ring on it. Of course, nobody wept at the climax because it was a dry age. There was a load of dignity all piled up like fireplace wood, and so it was very comforting that the bluejay perched right on top of it and shouted "Nosegay" just at me.

"What's that, Pappa," Frederica said with pink tongue fornicating with her red lips. "Pappa, are you cold?"

There was an answer somewhere. Maybe the minister supplied it. He was that kind; standing there, with his finger always on God's own private bell-button. Frederic and Fredericus wore expensive grey pants which showed nothing, as if they'd folded their masculinity like handkerchiefs. Laundered, too. It kept the bluejay in a merry mood, and it was a pity you didn't have some popcorn for it. And then everything sort of stewed and bubbled up into the sleekest ceremony you ever saw, for which you'd willingly pay time and a half for overtime. On it Mary ascendeth to heaven, and how fecklessly. It was a pity you'd left Mary's teeth behind; they would have enjoyed it so much. But I could tell them about it tonight, after I'd made a little home for myself and the jay, and we'd put Mary's teeth outside the door like a Welcome mat.

"Sincerity, simplicity, integrity . . ." said the preacher, and one could see old Predestination shrink in his back seat, his jaws dead on his plug tobacco; and Divine Grace, shutting his eyes, paying strict attention to his asthma; and Common Grace who was somewhat younger and fatter, wipe

his steamed glasses. Poor old fools, they'd mistakenly walked to the church first, and now here beneath the cemetery spruces they couldn't do much but slap at the ubiquitous mosquitoes.

But, when you came home, you felt so raggy you hung yourself on one of Mary's nails behind the stove, thinking that if this were outdoors at least the jay would come and snatch away your old chrysalis. And unlike falling off the old picket fence, there was nothing moist, or heavy, or smelly about it. Even Mary's teeth had nothing to offer by way of rebuttal, consolation, advice or condemnation: not those first few days . . .

Soon, however, gathering their loins together, Frederic and Fredericus and Frederica made some final ado over the teeth, and then decided to close the house firmly upon you. To leave you hanging here, through all the cold and barren winter months, while they went toying with the global war over bridge and rummy. En masse they descended upon Miami where everybody, oh simply anybody who is anybody, went to bed with bell-hops, bookies, jockies, horses, greyhounds, celluloid whores and even non-Protestants. Not those three, of course; you could even observe that from your humble nail. No, they went there to get a better perspective of your hanging here on that nail in the closed house and to figure out some brand new ways of shedding tears for Mary beneath the benevolent Florida sun.

"GODS LIVE IN WOODS"

FRANK SARGESON

(*New Zealand*)

AFTER THEY'D finished a late breakfast Henry put some more fire on and filled up the kettle. Then he brought out a big thermos and began to cut slices of bread. Rex still had plenty to say, but Henry interrupted him.

I'm going to bring some sheep down from the back, he said.

Good, Rex said, and he went on talking.

Rex was one of Henry's nephews and it was donkey's years since he'd been down to the farm, not since he'd been a boy. The previous evening he'd driven down for the Easter weekend. He'd arrived late, but full of talk, and they hadn't gone to bed until long after midnight. Anyhow it made a change for his uncle Henry; he was a bachelor, and except when he had somebody there helping him on the farm he lived on his own. It was years now since he'd finished breaking in his farm from heavy bush country.

Come on, Henry said, or it'll be lunchtime before we start.

He put what they were taking to eat in a pikau, and they went outside. There had been rain in the night but now it was a fine hot day, one right out of the box. As much of the sky as you could see between the sides of the valley was a wonderful blue. Henry let the dogs off the chain, and they bounded about until they were sure where the boss was going, then they went on ahead along the road that led up the pumice floor of the valley that was Henry's farm. And it was only a few minutes up the road to the woolshed, its pens overshadowed by huge willows. Rex remembered the woolshed from the time he had been there as a boy, but the willows had only just been planted then.

By Jove, Uncle Henry, he said, they make a man realize he's a lot older than he feels.

Not far beyond the woolshed the road ended. Here the valley began to close in and there were no more pumice flats, the spurs being thicker and coming down right to the creek. And above the creek the track that began where the road left off was cut into the spurs. It was really what was left of a tramline that had been used for bringing out logs. Nor was the country so good up here; it was even steeper, and on the shady faces the fern had properly got away. And places where the grass still held were scarred by slips that showed up the clay and papa. One of these had come down

from above the track, and piled up on it before going on down into the creek. A chain or so of fence had been in its way and it had gone too. You should see some posts and wire sticking out of the clay.

That one came down in the flood last winter, Henry said. A man is lucky to have any farm left. But what was it you were saying? he said.

And Rex went on to say what nonsense it was for Easter to come at the wrong time of the year. It's to do with re-birth, he said. Springtime. It's a pagan ceremony really.

Yes? Henry said.

And Rex said he didn't go to church any more, he'd joined the Rationalists instead.

His uncle listened while he went on to explain himself, and by that time the valley had begun to widen out again. All the same it was the end of it, the side ridges joined up in a tremendous circle, and the basin that they made was broken up by spurs coming down off the skyline. And filling a long wide gully between two of them was the only piece of bush that was left on the farm. Everywhere else you saw only the grass, sheep and cattle dotted about, fern and manuka getting away, the fire-blackened skeletons of trees still standing, and the great bare faces with the clay and papa showing. It was as though everything there was to see was there to be seen. But looking up towards the bush wasn't at all the same, you couldn't help but feel that it was quite different.

It's an easier climb up this way, Henry said.

He turned off towards the bush, and they crossed over the creek just above where another one came down from the bush and joined in. And you couldn't help noticing that the water was cloudy in one and clear in the other. At that moment Rex was saying that religion didn't have any meaning any more, but his uncle interrupted him. He was standing on top of the bank where he could watch the two streams mix.

A man can stand here and see his farm going down to the sea, he said. But carry on with what you were saying, he said, and going up to the bush Rex went on to say how science had got the wood on religion properly. Yet believe it or not Uncle Henry, I know a crazy sort of guy who reckons things'll crash and then there'll be a return to the old pagan religions. But can you see people going back to believing in gods and dragons? Well, I'm blown if I can.

But for some time the dogs had been out of sight somewhere ahead, all of a sudden some sheep moved, and by the time Henry had got the dogs to come behind they were on the edge of the bush. And for a while inside the going was tough. There was the sloping ground for one thing, but it was mainly because, years ago, the biggest trees had been taken out. The stumps still had the sloven sticking up, though it was covered over with moss now.

And there was the litter of the tops, and the logs that hadn't been worth while, all overgrown now, rotting, and hung with moss.

Rex didn't talk any more. He followed along behind his uncle and the dogs came after, panting, flattening themselves on their bellies to squeeze under the biggest logs, jumping onto the smaller and then down. Henry knew his way through, the tough part didn't last long and then it was a fairly easy grade up what seemed to be the back of a side spur. It was more open bush too, nothing had been taken out, and every here and there they'd come on great barrels that were springing up, up, until they passed out of sight above the lighter stuff. Henry said that climbing the hills made him feel a lot older than looking at the willows did, and he'd keep on stopping for a breather, and they'd stand there without even Rex talking. After the sun it was all very cool and dim, with a smell of damp and rot, and still, except for the birds and the sound of the creek somewhere down below. The dogs stopped too and panted with their tongues hanging out. Nor did they wander, they were content to follow along close behind, as if they too had the feeling that this wasn't at all like being in the open country.

Then Henry said, Do you remember the time you thought you were lost?

I had the wind up that time, Rex said. But dash it all Uncle Henry, remember I was only a kid then.

And it started him off talking again. He said he'd often thought about how frightened he'd been that time, when really there'd been nothing to be frightened of.

Well, Henry said, it isn't too nice getting caught in the bush overnight.

Still, Rex said, you know there's nothing that can hurt you. I wouldn't mind spending a night in the bush. Not now, he said.

No? Henry said. But the wetas come out at night. And he laughed. The Maoris call them taipos.*

But Rex said that was just a piece of superstition, and he was going to explain about that when his uncle said, Listen!

Quite close to them something was moving, then there was the stillness again. The dogs peered. They pricked their ears, left off panting to sniff, and you could see the hair bristling on their backs. Then Henry took Rex's arm and pointed. See, he said. For a moment Rex couldn't see, then he did.

Good God! he said.

From only a few yards away the face of a bullock with big curving horns was staring at them. And from what you could see of the rest of it, it was a wonderful dark-red beast.

I need a fence down below, Henry said. The sheep don't come up through

* Taipo: colloquially interpreted by the European as "devil."

here but the cattle do. And I've got to have the cattle to help me keep the fern down.

He stooped to pick up something to throw but the beast suddenly turned round. There was a crash, a sway of small stuff, and it was gone.

Rex wanted to know, didn't he feel like cutting the bush out?

No, Henry said, I've done enough of that.

Why? Rex said. Wouldn't it pay?

Oh yes, Henry said, there'd be money in it all right.

And they started climbing again, and it wasn't long before they came out of the bush without having gone through very much of it. They'd come out high up on one side, and stopping for another breather before going out of the shade Henry took a couple of apples out of his pikau, and while they ate them he explained to Rex that this strip of country running round the back of the bush was the hardest place on the farm to muster. If the sheep ran down into the gully where the creek started on its run through the bush it was almost impossible to get them out.

But I'll show you, he said.

It was rough country, and they were quite a time working their way round behind the bush until they came to the edge of the gully Henry had told about. He stopped then and said they were lucky. There were no sheep down below, they were all feeding higher up, and it looked as if they'd probably run the right way.

But if you don't mind, he said, you go down to the bottom and try to stop anything that comes.

He waited until Rex had got to the right place, then he sent one of the dogs out. It had a long way to go and the sheep never saw it coming, and it didn't bark until just at the right moment. The sheep began to move, and a string of them crossed over the top of the gully just as Henry wanted them to. But the dog went back out of sight, you could hear it barking, then three more sheep showed up in a great hurry and Henry quickly called the dogs off. The sheep started to run across but halfway over they stopped. Henry and Rex began calling out, *Ho, ho, ho*, but the three sheep didn't move, and the dog was too sudden when Henry told him to fetch them on. In its fright the last sheep turned down towards Rex, and although he did his best it was no good, the sheep beat him. It was a big wether too, and it never stopped until it finished up right down in the hollow by the creek where it went into the bush. And down there it became even more upset at finding itself without any of its cobbles.

Never mind, Henry said.

But Rex was excited too. He ran down after the wether and was lucky enough to grab hold of it first go. He sat over it, holding on tight, and as

he tried to get the beast to move uphill his face looking up at his uncle showed how proud and excited he was feeling.

It's no good, Henry said. Let him go.

Rex said, Say he took it down through the bush? It ought to be easy along the creek, he said.

And Henry laughed.

There's bluffs forty feet high, he said.

Well look here, Uncle Henry, Rex said, d'you mind if I have a go?

No, Henry said, it would be a proper mug's game.

But instead of saying anything to that Rex worked the sheep round until he had it facing downhill. All of a sudden it tried to make a break but he held on, riding it, then they were hidden by the first trees. The next moment Henry could hear them splashing in the creek.

That evening Henry had his dinner and cleared away afterwards before he showed any signs of doing something. And by that time it had been dark for several hours. First he took Rex's dinner off the rack and put it in the oven, then he made some fresh tea and filled the thermos. And after he'd found a torch that would work he went out and let the dogs off the chain. It turned out that he needn't have bothered though, because he hadn't got as far as the woolshed when the dogs barked. He cooeyed, and Rex answered, and coming round a bend in the road Henry caught him in the light of the torch. He didn't keep it on him though, he quickly turned it away.

Are you all right? he said.

Right as rain, Rex said.

But Henry had seen the wreck that he was, his face bleeding and his clothes filthy and torn.

He didn't say anything, and going down the road Rex said only one thing, You know, Uncle Henry, I'd certainly get rid of that bloody bit of bush if I were you.

THE LOVERS

JOHN BERRYMAN

HE USED to come to see us one summer when we lived on the Island. As I reached the corner of the house wheeling my bicycle, which I was not permitted to ride on the lawn, dirty and hot in the late afternoon, he would be the first person in view if he was there, sitting stretched at full length but hardly at ease in a beach-chair just at the edge of the tulip-bed, balancing his drink on its wooden arm, with his head lifted staring out towards my mother and listening to my father, who sat invariably a few feet away in an angle formed by the house and garage, also facing the cannas bordering the lawn at the back. No matter how quietly I approached, my mother always heard me and had turned from her care of the cannas by the time she came into sight as I advanced, her face pale above the blooms, her inexhaustible brown hair blowing, her garden-glove dark against the orange sky, raising a hand to me. I never waved in reply without a twinge, an impulse of remorse for my absent day, the anxiety I knew she was feeling,—for this was the year when what she called my violent indolence first showed itself. It was the summer I was in love with Billie. Billie was an interesting blonde girl who lived half a mile from us, the daughter of a notable playwright; but the relation, if it had lost none of its tenacity, was complicated because her mother had left him—they had been the centre of an artistic set in some middle-Western city, and she had then written a book about him—and was now married to an ace of the last War, a small shattered man, a European, who was kind to me and seemed nearly invisible in the rambling noisy suburban mansion filled night and day with hangers-on, suitors, unclassified cosmopolitan guests. The unsubstantiality, for me, of this menage was enforced less by its confusion, or my shyness, than by my sense of wonder at its names; Mme. Durand had living with her her mother, Mrs. Austin, and in a reaction of feeling after her last divorce she had changed Billie's name—the playwright's—to the irrelevant name of another former husband, Neville; so that of the three women in this family still dominated by the memory (and the existence, productive erratically of extravagant gifts for Billie, nearby in New York) of the excommunicated celebrity, none bore his name, and their own names senselessly differed. "Billie," too, which I knew as I knew my biceps, flexed and felt endlessly in hope, would disappear for minutes into its incomprehensible original, Wilhelmina; and I loved her as against a set of uncertain troubled lights. Of Madame I remember little except her intolerable fatness, the nascent snobbism in Billie which I associated with her, and a luncheon

described to me long afterwards by my mother, one of Mme. Durand's large hen-parties, at which one of the guests, a tall fair woman who had been told by her psychiatrist that she could attain normality only by giving way immediately to her impulses, of whatever sort, amazed the assembly of fifteen women by suddenly reaching into the centre of the table, snatching up the odd-appearing main dish, sniffing it, and making loudly a remark so atrocious that I only after years, with the greatest difficulty, learnt what it was. Repeated hesitantly, with recovered horror, in my mother's charming voice, it seemed at the moment of shock nakedly to score the tone of that society of the distant summer of the executive class, a society abrupt and sordid enough—the weekend parties in the Clubhouse, the sleeping, the desertions—not much to suffer under a symbol of such concise ferocity; only my father and my mother were distinct from it. But he too, our visitor, and aside from the accident of my not liking him, appeared to stand somewhere else, apart from the Lennoxes and Clouds and Gores, the people who lived along the Lane and their friends who would be drifting and drinking and flowering on the lawns when I returned in the afternoon. The sun was setting always behind them in my mind, because I rarely saw them at any other time. I left the house at eight-thirty every morning on my bicycle, raced to Mme. Durand's and waited restlessly on her drive below the grove of trees for Billie to come out, and off we went. We made this arrangement because I avoided entering her house. The sense of unreality which in itself it gave me was heightened by a feeling, which I began to have that summer, that I was not appearing in my true character. Although I could have given no account of that character, I was aware of the discontinuity between my life at school, absorbing if horrible, and my frenzied useless vacations; and I had an intermittent consciousness of guilt. My English master had given me a list of books to read during the summer, 19th Century novels for the most part, and I remember I went faithfully to the public library every few days and brought volumes home, two or three at a time, returned them, and brought others; but it was my brother who read them; and the advantage, although years my junior, he then established over me he has never relinquished,—in our discussions of fiction he still assumes a tone, dating from that summer, of immeasurable experience and superior judgment.

What our visitor thought of the life we led, or of the life rather which at my level I shared and in the midst of which my parents had their different life, I doubt that it occurred to me to wonder, self-absorbed, going and coming. I saw him at most, every few days, for an hour at five or six o'clock; save once, he never came in the evening, and he never arrived before my father, who drove out from the city, changed at once, and was facing the cannas, armed with that admirable brand of Scotch which I have scarcely

tasted since those illegal days (our porter's charge for "bringing it in" was invariable and so heavy that with the indulgence of despair my father ordered liquors and wines more expensive and rare than seemed sensible later across a counter), ready for anyone, by five o'clock. My mother adjusted her time between the guests and the flowers, never appearing distant, although when she tossed, as now and then she hospitably did, a comment from across the lawn, it came to us with a diminished sound. The Clouds and Parkers would be there, perhaps Justin and Margaret, perhaps Macomber and Mrs. Tench, or the Dimmings. Or he would be there alone. I sat on the edge of the porch with a limeade, if I was not indoors following the dancebands, and listened to my father's familiar, ever-changing accounts of the life of his young manhood, his leaving college at his father's death, the Continent before the War, old Baltimore, old New York; of conditions on the Market—it was an unsettled but promising summer; of hunting, and the theatres of the past, restaurants and women. Our visitor listened also; I watched him, for I had already learnt that these stories which interested me, no matter how frequently told, so intensely—so spacious and free the life in them seemed to me, so daring and rich their recital by my father—could be tedious to others; I watched him for a sign of disloyalty, and I never saw one. Yet I thought that somehow they did not deeply engage him. His mind in the immense head kept on working; when he looked at me I saw it, and I thought sometimes I could see pain, or longing,—although it may be that my father's reminiscence interested him more than I imagined, for one afternoon, coming when my father had stayed in town for dinner, he seemed restless with my mother, and left at once.

He said little, at any rate; of himself, nothing. We did not understand clearly what he "did," and he never, although my mother several times suggested it, brought anyone with him. This was why I disliked him, perhaps: he seemed singular,—independent, as no one else I knew was. And then he looked at me, he looked at all of us, most at my mother, when his chair was turned as my father's was, with uncomfortable intensity; he looked at me sometimes as if he did not believe I existed. Again, when I would be included in the talk and he turned to me with his slow, holding glance, I felt the obscure pressure of a real interest, and I avoided his eyes. To his rare questions about Billie, whom he met one afternoon when I brought her home, although they were put with the gravity which was habitual with him and with which I was unfamiliar in such questions, even was pleased by,—I replied as shortly, with as great nervousness, the same tortured grin, as to anyone else's questions. What he said to my father, however, often fixed my attention and remained with me for days. He spoke deliberately, with a kind of constraint which gave his words un-

natural, memorable emphasis. One day, on my father's referring to an unexpected Congressional vote of the day before and asking his opinion, he said instantly, almost with impatience, that politics did not concern him. "What does concern you then?" asked my father, more nearly indifferent to politics himself than any other man in his set, but surprised to hear the blank disclaimer which he could never have made and would have contradicted had it been made by him. "Work!—a wife, and work!" our visitor said after a pause, during which Billie's face hovered so vividly before me, its round blonde brows and low forehead conjured by the question, that his reply reached my ears to stun me; I did not understand the words in their starkness—"work" particularly fell into my mind like a word unknown, with its special weight from the idiom of workers in science and art—I did not understand them, but I recognized that their energy and sentiment were inimical to the beloved face which they had caused to vanish, as I felt them to be utterly strange to any answer which I might have made to the question, and I resented them, at the same time that their formality charmed me into the wish that I might have summoned, or might sometimes summon, such a response myself to another question at another time.

Often thereafter this reply recurred to me, always mysterious, with incomprehensible reaches behind its bluntness, evoking dissonant emotions, and always with the power, which nothing else possessed, of banishing the face which haunted me; or if, after a time, not quite of causing it to disappear, of driving it to a certain distance,—at least of touching the springs of its ghostly force. No doubt I was in love with Billie; I said so a thousand times daily to her with my lips, with every motion, every impulse, I cried it to myself at night, lying uncovered on my bed sweating, lively with ecstasy; but the indiscriminating violence of my feelings would be better suggested by saying that she obsessed me. She was a torture, an enchantment. Her figure running, loose in its short light dress, her golden hair tossed in the morning light as she flew towards me down the turn of the drive, made me weak, like a repeated blow upon the muscle of my upper arm. My whole body, braced, eager and weak, at once shrank and yearned towards the moment of meeting, when we would cling kissing, hidden by the trees above and the wall below, for the first time that day together. Childish those embraces certainly were, in their crude clouded view of what union might be, in their awkwardness, restlessness, such that at any second either of us might break causelessly away; an adult, watching, might have found us absurd or pretentious, experiencing the emotion with which a professional man in the audience observes, smiling, the efforts of an actor who is impersonating a member of his profession, and how badly. Yet as we pressed together our lips and breasts helplessly, wantonly, we were in

darkness—the darkness of touch and magnification of sound, the splitting of the ear-drum at a murmur, the precipitation of the soul into a palm. The delicacy and the flow of darkness; the darkness broke—not when our bodies parted—long before, when the possibility, the far view of parting lighted my mind again with the abruptness and brilliance, blinding the eyes, of a switch pressed. In a second it will be over! I thought agonized, and the irresolutions of pleasure and pain which are a child's first lesson in the world hung over me anew, so that I could not have told whether I was glad or sorry when at last we drew apart, her face smiling already and hot, my hands trembling, and I said "Get on." She jumped on the cross-bar then, her arms inside mine on the handles, her hands on mine in an old joke that she steered better than I, and leaned back swerving against my left shoulder—the unnerving moment of each day,—while her massed hair brushed my neck and cheek; I got the bicycle-rest up; we started slowly in the gravel and picked up suddenly, coasting down the steep final turn of her drive into the road.

The days passed like a coasting, a hot wind. They were Billie agile in the glare of the beach, shouting above the Sound pounding the sand, Billie across the net bent forward, balancing from foot to foot, waiting for service, Billie bounding away towards the sideline, turned for a backhand, Billie's throat going back for a lob, her eyes gleaming as she grinned out at me from a tunnel in the fortification we were building, her voice, her weight against my shoulder and arm, her small breasts we examined on the porch in darkness, marvelling and tremulous, with the fearful anxiety of the traveller who lingers in a strange city and rushes to the next and lingers again, waiting for news—what news? what news?—from his half-forgotten, absorbing home. Late in the summer, the worst days, when nights held the heat still, the pavements never cooled, the float dried as we dived and burned us when we climbed back,—we were bold and wild. Of the famous innocence of first love, celebrated and remembered with desire by the poets whose childhood was solitary, we had never much, or if in the beginning we were so, I lose it now in memory; what I recall is a plunge down, deeper daily in forbidden complex experience, hesitations and curiosities and indulgences of the porch in darkness. But late in the summer we passed feverishly into regions so wicked and pleasant, that we seemed to ourselves by August's end old in vice: by the time of the masquerade at the Club-house it seemed to us that we had no more to learn—not that we were exhausted, not that we did not suffer our privations, but the capacity of our selves was measured. Purity of feeling, selflessness of feeling, is the achievement of maturity; we begin in the slime, the naked beating self. Yet in a civilized view our diversions that summer left us unsoiled, and Billie went back pure, intact to school, an image of tan youth, with candid eyes,—to

be violated next year, perhaps, casually across the kitchen table of a fraternity house, tipsy in the vague light from a door half-opened into the passage, the dance music faint at this distance, by a boy who did not know her name, her magical name, against which no fatigue or incantation had power to preserve me except our visitor's grave words, repeated by me to the ceiling, like a rite, with envy and relief, as meaningless as for some stray from the street, crept into a church for a moment out of the sun, the Elevation of the Host.

It may be that he preserved me, or was able to provide my only aid, because he preserved himself—I did not know from what, but I had a sense, related to his solitude, that he did. Not from feeling, certainly: I had the testimony of his phrase and the weight of his eyes when I intercepted their glance flowing across the lawn while my father talked. Perhaps from the expressions that others used, the forms men's feelings regularly take; these he seemed to avoid as by nature; he never greeted my parents, never thanked them when he left; he made no effort that we could see,—was not, as we say, involved,—and when he walked into our living room on the night of the masquerade dressed merely in a white linen suit, I was not surprised, although with what emotion I could spare from my own excitement I exulted over his mistake. This was the first year I was allowed to go to the great September party which closed the season in the Lane; it was known as "the masquerade" but was simply a fancy-dress ball, very fancy, to which everyone looked forward for weeks; Billie was going too for the first time—all the day before she had talking of nothing else, intoxicating herself with it, her first grown-up dance. We would meet there. Now our guest was late, and my mother was keeping us. My father, dressed as a musketeer, from the figure of Athos in the illustrated volume of Dumas he had given to me at Christmas, posed amiably at the mantel and said nothing about our guest's lack of costume. I sat tense and silent. But they talked while we waited for my mother to come down, and it struck me, through my distraction, that our friend was in an extraordinary mood. It was impossible not to listen to him. I never at any other time heard him so little reserved. His voice, even, as he swung up and down the room, talking rather rapidly, not loudly, was rich with anticipation and what, to me who knew him, was almost recklessness, although to a stranger he would have appeared controlled enough. The burden of his talk I forget; he made images, he recalled, he dallied, he soared, and the unaccustomed tide of that wonderful voice—stilling quite, during the spell, my dislike—filled our rooms like the beating of wings, the leap of the heart in devotion and hope.

"Ah!" said my father. I turned, and there on the stairway, in gold, queenly and strange, stood my beautiful mother, taller and younger, smiling down at us. She stood for a long moment in the bright lamplight,

triumphant, happy in our gaze, before she continued her descent. "Good evening!" she greeted us. "But you don't look the man for a party—" Her tone and startled air turned me again to our friend—another stranger—his face rigid, with such despair in the passionate eyes, such black depth as of a vision of Hell, that I could have struck him. It was as if the room darkened and whirled with bitterness. In another second his features had softened, his glare died out. What I had seen seemed phantasmal as he came a step forward and said in his normal serious voice that if his astonishment had surprised her he was sorry: it had been, really, a tribute, and should be forgiven: "You *are* magnificent,"—turning to my father, "I congratulate you!"

The expectations of youth are its oblivion. I had forgotten my amazement, forgotten the incident five minutes later, when we mounted to the open floodlit doorway of the Clubhouse, where groups and couples in motley costumes, outrageous, exquisite, clownish, passed and repassed, shouting, laughing, the orchestra sighing from within a sweet lament. "Here are the brother and sister," someone said as we entered the light—Mrs. Lennox. My father bowed. At this moment, however, the pleasure which I never failed to take in this compliment—in that the metaphorical relationship seemed closer, for my mother and me, than our familiar one, and made me appear to myself older—was blocked as it rose. Across the ballroom by a table I caught sight of Billie, in a blue dress, waving a glass, not at me: she was gesturing, talking with three boys, or men, grouped before her. My breathing seemed oppressed. I started around the dance-space. Halfway, she laughed—I could not hear her above the music—and handing her glass to one of the men, danced away with another, a Spanish gentleman. Danced away with another—danced away with another—while I followed, disappointed and anxious. When at last I got her attention and cut in, she merely said "Hello" without surprise or warmth, we danced ten steps, another man cut. I leaned against the wall for a moment while the music rose and fell. Then as I followed, my heart throbbing and sick, my brain hot with betrayal, dominoes, slaves, gentlemen, warriors swarmed in my sight towards her,—divided her,—the room turned on the blue dress like a wheel. The tunes changed, the noise increased, my terror grew. She seemed not to see me, stared past or looked carelessly across as if I were a little boy with whom she played once, years ago. And she herself seemed to me strange. While night before last . . . I tried to call up and hold an image of the porch, but it slipped from me in my distress, the gathering unreality. What I wanted at last was to go outside and weep, but I dared not leave, hoping still for change, at any instant—turning in a glide-step there, ten feet from me, radiant, blind—a sign, recognition, our love, made once more whole. I wandered back and forth, trying to control my face,

confused, more and more tired, watching my mother whirling and shining like a shower of gold and gold-brown hair across the room, waiting, waiting. Several times I saw our friend against the wall near the doorway, and once he beckoned to me. I edged my way around the dancers, trying to catch a glimpse again of Billie, whom I had lost.

"Why are you not dancing?"

"You aren't dancing yourself. I haven't seen you once," I said, too sick and desperate for manners.

He looked out into the throng with a curious expression, as of an intensity of search which had ceased to be personal—the expression he has in most of his photographs of recent years, and the one I remember, since we never saw him again. "That's true," he said. "But you can hardly have my excellent reason."

"What's that?"

"I am in danger," he said looking down at me seriously.

I was puzzled or angry: "You keep out of everything, don't you?"

"Keep out?" he was startled. "Here I am: I came! But the arrangements are not mine."

His answer, although I did not try to make it out, touched another bitterness in me. "Is that why you haven't got a costume on?"

He smiled: "I have. I wear it against danger."

But as he spoke I had seen Billie again, and muttering something quickly, I left him on my hopeless terrible quest, blown from corner to corner by the music of the dance. It is my fate, I thought: to follow her, to be near her if I can. As I went, the part of my mind which was not eyes tried to recall the sign I had had, the phrase, of which his last words had almost reminded me; but I could not, and in any event—while my eyes fixed her glowing face and my heart heard her name—I knew that it would be of no use to me now.

(Reprinted from *The Kenyon Review*)

A STORY FOR A MILLION MEN

And Three Other Sketches

JACK JONES

. . . THE face inclines slowly into the twilight. it seems to smile. the motor splashing water toward the sixth star and four dimensional laughter, which she listens to in ecstasy, her palms against her ears. it's cold: lend me your heart to warm my hands. no? sweet, last night I took it in a dream. her face changes. she asks the cop in the soundproof room, breaking his ironic club against the black mouth, arrest that man for theft. the prostitute's elbow shoves her aside: the week's percentage. what did you say lady the cop asks. you're damn wise, says the pro with a vicious grin. the cop kicks his knee into her public parts. the resultant right angle staggers out. what did you say lady. I said arrest that man.

a marxist?

absolutely.

evidently, evidently, the cop snarls slowly. free love, or in legal terminology, rape. do you prefer to have him hung or fried?

tortured.

a lady of taste, it seems, approves the cop tenderly. but as yet indefinite. in this city we have quite a variety of torments. pardon my erection. even though somewhat conventional, I would suggest castration.

she ponders. I stare at her through the bloody light. the Negro, listening intently, begins to spit out his teeth. the white blobs bounce with originality from the stone floor. she searches my eyes for the first time this year.

no.

let's see lady, the cop reflects, let's see.

(the floor trembles. from outside, a headlight zooms across the drawn down black window shade).

the cop draws a greasy list from his desk. would you care to peruse our catalogue?

her glance drops down it slowly. she is smiling faintly.

number one?

ineffective, she thinks.

some excellent results with number eight.

crude.

number five?

never heard of it.

foreign. number nineteen?

tedious.

JONES

well. oh. lady, perhaps we have something which meets your needs. number twenty-seven; as it is called by our college men, prevention of urination.

deliberately the Negro farts. she looks at him without disdain. but I see the tip of her tongue between her teeth and reach for the knob, which won't turn.

it seems difficult.

oh, no lady, the cop's face seems suddenly to bleed humorously. oh, no, no, no. not in the least. it is extraordinarily simple. effects within twenty-four hours, depending—

tomorrow I'll come and see, if it's a nice day.

the Negro begins to laugh, but now that he has no remaining teeth the cop is helpless. she advances toward the door at my back, parting the bloody light with her body. I fall to my knees and beg her pardon. she does not look at me, and grasps the knob, which turns.

a detail, the cop calls. duration?

until he dies.

her footfalls recede. again the Negro begins to laugh with perfect confidence. it is at first assumed, I think, and then becomes unconscious. my fingers close upon the knob. the Negro is watching me with blank contempt. he and I look at each other for a moment. he twists from his chair: I step away from the door. we converge upon the cop down the sides of a 30 degree angle. he sees us coming and smiles with passion. but also with some fear. at least we are sure of that . . .

THE RENEGADE

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

<i>The Petty-bourgeois Renegade</i>	Mr. Henry Spargen
<i>The Petty-bourgeois Revolutionary</i>	Mr. Simon Krapp
<i>The Masses</i>	Mr. Robert Krapp
<i>A Proletarian, Considerably Advanced</i>		Mr. Fred Mazac

violet controls the cement wall standing to the left. no sun. the sea air is advancing through the garden. we are sitting on steel chairs near the wall. at the table empty bottles have overflowed and some are lying on the ground. eventually Krapp asks me if I have a football somewhere around. I press the bell.

the general strike, says Krapp, looking at my eyes.

I laugh. in the basement I find a dead white football in a chest. before going out to the terrace, I watch Krapp for thirty seconds through a window. the football is flabby: I inflate it to tension with the small pump. Krapp

takes the ball and walks to the other end of the garden, where the steel door is. he throws the ball, and I catch it still sitting in the chair. the door moves inward, and I drop the ball, which dribbles to one side. I grasp the edge of the bulletproof table. Krapp's son enters with his lurching stride. I ignore him and rush to the door. an expert has estimated that it could be violated by a bomb. it is unmarked. it occurs to me that I forgot to lock it. "impossible." I know that it is useless to lock the door; therefore I do not close it.

in the interval violet has spread from the wall and now infects everything. in counterposition, the wall is almost black. Krapp's son is talking. I am unable to make anything out of it, but Krapp seems to understand him perfectly.

the Political Committee has split over the question of insurrection, says Krapp. Palmer resigns as Organizational Secretary, and supports the thesis that, since the bulk of the garrisons have not declared for the revolution, to depend upon the support of the armies abroad is adventurist. the majority replied that the garrisons are not the thermometer of the troops abroad.

most interesting, I say, reviewing the wall.

here the workers are in control. capitalist authority has been dispersed by the revolutionary police. rumors that people are being arrested in the city.

I am aware that the last sentence is Krapp's way of amusing himself.

how are you, Robert? I ask, and after shaking hands, obtrusively wipe idiot spittle off on the seat of my trousers. you play football, perhaps? I ask, looking at Krapp.

Robert says something.

I'm afraid I didn't quite catch that.

you had better lock the door, says Krapp.

I go over to the table and pick up the ball, I throw it to Krapp, who catches it and stands expressionlessly holding it. I crook my finger. he throws it back. I toss it at Robert. it hits him in the face, and bounces so resiliently that it rolls back almost to my feet. I refrain from laughing. Robert's nose starts to bleed. he puts up a finger which comes back painted. he stares at it with stupefaction.

I throw the ball again. to my amazement he stops it before it reaches his face. Krapp has not moved a muscle. I crook my finger. Robert doesn't throw it back. he says something.

I'm afraid I—

he wants to keep the ball, says Krapp. I'll buy it from you.

I think not.

when I go over to him, he has the ball in his stomach covered with both arms. what do you think you're doing? I ask, smiling a little. he shakes his head. I push him up against the wall, trying to work the ball out. when

he continues to cling to it, I hit him with my left fist, just below the ball. he lets go and slides into the narrow flower bed. I toss the ball into the air, catch it and glance at Krapp. Krapp advises Robert to kill me.

I slam the door behind me and run down the broken sidewalk. I turn into the first alley and watch Robert lurch past. I don't like the look of him. I wait a few seconds, cross the street and go in the opposite direction. as I pass my door, Krapp stares at me from his position leaning on the door jamb. three blocks away, I enter the hotel by the courtyard in the back. I hear a sound behind me and stepping back into the street, I observe Robert Krapp turning the corner. he walks toward me quickly, but he does not give the impression of haste. I step into the courtyard and lock the gate. I listen. Robert stops outside and tries the gate. he can't get in. I leave the gate and walk toward the back door of the hotel; dismissing the thought of Krapp's son, and still holding the ball, I go into the lobby. the people there begin to think I am a coach for a college or professional team. I register. I sit down near a window and unlacing the ball, I deflate the bladder and rip it out. I blow this up until it is a puffed distortion. I think of the girl I know who has cancer of the breast. (the best way to kill yourself, I said, is—) for no conscious reason I stick a pin into the bladder, which explodes. I throw the limp and torn bladder into the wastebasket by the chair. the elevators are running: it must be after six p.m.: the general strike was to last twelve hours. I cross the lobby. I am the only passenger on this trip. the operator looks me over and asks me what I'm doing for the revolution.

not a god damn thing. so what?

the operator regards me with a shining sneer.

you can't be CP if you use the word revolution. SP, SWP, SLP? A Marlenite?

SLP.

from centrists I have nothing to fear. I affect tolerance and light a cigarette. a trifle sectarian, don't you think?

sectarian, the operator says. sectarian. you talk like a labor faker.

naive, I think. the question of taking power. 57 percent of the vote. the lawyers find a technical difficulty. but the general strike. the bosses say to each other Gee, ain't that tough, and mail you the keys. personally, I'll take cocaine.

so that's where.

Lenin.

listen, how many times you read *Capital*?

twice.

the operator points toward his lapel, where there is no chrysanthemum. six times, I read that book. the car stops, and he opens the doors, still wait-

ing for the effect. I think of him lying on the bed in a five-dollar room late summer evenings, reading Marx with a 25 watt bulb.

I get it. too dumb to understand the first time.

I leave the elevator and go down the corridor. as I twist my key I sense that he is watching. I avoid the light switch and throw my coat on the bed. I sit down and discard one shoe. the light in the bathroom on the other side of the room goes on. bent over for the other shoe, I look up, drenched in explosive sweat. Robert Krapp is standing far inside the bathroom, all details exposed by the formal light. "I haven't got the balls—the ball," I think. "what will he do to me?"

THE STRATEGY OF ANTI-CONSTRICTION

a representative of the vacillation is being conveyed toward negotiations. the jeep is being unfriendly toward his buttocks, but the representative overlooks this, considering that the future will evaluate the coming stabilization of unrest as a landmark in the advancement of humanity. (it is fairly certain that the bourgeoisie will concede a committee of inquiry.)

the representative Mora speaks to one of his escort in English. I am extremely fond of Coca-Cola.

he is slightly disconcerted when there is no reply to this reference. he reflects, adds hastily: and also of Pepsi-Cola. very much.

no comment.

Mora thinks: "is it possible that they conceive I am hinting, and are embarrassed because there is nothing to offer me?"

I am not at all thirsty, he remarks with a bitter smile.

this is rather false: they have been riding along a dusty road for two hours. one of the soldiers offers his canteen immediately: he has been instructed to discourage conversation but to see that this leftist element had his wants fulfilled. offended, Mora refuses.

they are pressed by rows of jungle. it will be an hour before they reach the cement road, and two more until the city where Mora will get into a train for the capital of the South American state. presently Mora suggests a pause for urination. this proposal is well received. the jeep halts. one of the escorts searches for his lunch; the other drops on his stomach in the shadow of some foliage. Mora advances to the edge of the jungle. the location is not particularly pleasing. Mora is a man of taste. he goes on. inside, the air is saturated with cool oxygen; the sunlight is indirect. he finds a path and turns to follow it. before long he discovers and honors a suitable niche. on the way back, it is some time before he comprehends that he has taken a wrong turn somewhere. thinking to take a short cut, he leaves the path at right angles and strikes toward the road. but this direction is

also false; he is now deep into the jungle and with no path to guide him.

Mora is now disturbed. but he does not degrade himself by shouting for help. he takes off his sun-hat and rubs his sleeve against his wet face. "what nonsense!" he begins to circumnavigate a giant circle, which he is sure must strike the path somewhere. it doesn't. moreover, he cannot find the starting point.

he is fatigued and sits down on the grass, his knees up. a freely enterprising anaconda, which has been observing him with considerable interest, is stirred to action. it drops to the ground behind Mora and wraps a loop gayly around his waist. Mora is temporarily stupefied. then he decides not to enter into the spirit of the proceedings, and escapes. but his legs are corrected just above the knee.

Mora is a small man, but supple and still young. he cannot disengage his legs, but manages to keep erect and fights resolutely. from some distance, the head of the snake professionally supervises the operations of its prehensile tail. occasionally it makes a weird face at Mora in order to frighten him. the struggle is protracted. Mora makes an incorrect shift of weight and slips to one knee: at once the anaconda establishes another loop. the pressure around his chest now cannot be ignored.

Mora conceives a strategy. he lunges for the snake's neck, seizes it and squeezes passionately. the anaconda becomes understandably annoyed. in reprisal it tightens its coils. Mora is discouraged by pain; his grip involuntarily relaxes. the snake can now also afford to relax, but resumes its gradual constriction. again Mora attempts to strangle the snake, and again desists in agony. "is it not impossible to endure such a thing?" under his hands he feels the pulse of the anaconda's life. he experiences a few moments of clarity: either strike for freedom now, either spend every ounce of his strength and will for the immediate strangulation of what was destroying him; or submit to pitiless extinction. then Mora passes into a sensual fog. he loses his sense of category. his will dissolves into despair. the price of action seems so inhuman that he does not dare consider paying it. he tastes a bitter self-judgment. on both knees, he falls forward. caught between the coils, his left arm breaks.

at last Mora perceives that he has no chance. he bites a mouthful of warm grass. at the end he forgives himself a little. "if I die now," he thinks, "how long will she remember me?" the jungle considerably does not answer.

A MONOLOGUE AT DARK GARDENS, WITH EVALUATION BY THE LISTENER

the water was clear and acid-green, he said. the area involved was not more than two yards square. the sun passed the surface without reflecting,

and was diffused in the depths. floating, a platform like the cover of a small chest, colored a light cream. (the angle of my observation was 80 degrees, a foot or two above.) I had been sleeping since noon, and I had suffered a heavy defeat in the morning. I was in a sensual stupor from the heat and sleep: my thoughts were fluid and more or less free associationic, without responsibility to me. some of the things I was thinking began to bother me, and I reached down, pushing slowly through the resistant heat, for water. but on the shaking platform were two turtles and what may have been an infantile alligator—or some sort of lizard. I don't know. what I saw at once: the turtles were horribly tired.

the alligator was also tired, but he had reserves and was aware of it. some time passed, the alligator lying with his tail twitching back and forth. the turtles remained absolutely inert, and it occurred to me that they had died. I wasn't interested, you understand, but in that mood my thinking was an independent process. the blood still beating deeply in my head, I thought that I could see the pattern of their day. in crimson light the alligator had caught them sleeping on the bank. from then he had been driving them toward a destination, something like a dog drives sheep. the first hours must have been battles of maneuverability; afterwards, more steady going.

I saw all three animals begin to move. one turtle walked formally to the east edge of the platform and fell over in a sunflash of light brown rent by silver water. the alligator slid with a professional and dignified agility after him: the other turtle now lurched west. the alligator appeared in the wake of the east one, about a foot behind. the other turtle was now swimming west. this situation the alligator perceived.

his head was out of the water, cocked in an emotion perpetually on the verge of pertness: a sort of mordant but compassionate delicacy. I thought that his frustration had long since been carried to the point where it ceased to have a meaning; except perhaps its investment with the finality of a tautology. in counterposition, effectuality was now the disturbing element, and if serious could destroy his personality.

the sun began to fade, and the sky filled with leaden clouds, but it would not rain today. I knew that a hundred yards away an eleven-year-old girl in a rowboat, wearing blue shorts and a dark red sweater, was trying to propel her boat toward the drifting paddle by her hands, and below a barracuda begins to be attracted by those fingers. and when the girl awakes next morning, light soaked in gray rain is present in her room, and she thinks, "Suppose I had gone to play tennis yesterday."

you don't understand. I've seen too much of that sort of thing. situations as numb and clear as a cube of ice in your hand. routine, a little dull. all the same, it impressed me. as a symbol not a concrete thing, I think. a

shadow of another thing. while I watched the alligator turn and dart back for the west-going turtle, I felt a sort of tension, certainly not caused by what I was observing, nor by what I was conscious of; but by a submerged but frantic desire for that barracuda to get his dinner over with quickly, which is the symbol, the shadow of what waits along the path into the deepest part of the forest, the shadow that can be discerned far away, and yet there is no way back and a tangent is impossible—the infinite possibilities of the Third Imperialist War.

you are probably familiar with the recent theses of the German comrades—the retrogression of the central pattern of the economy and cultural superstructure into feudalist forms. there seems to be no reason why such a retrogression should not go much further back: to barbarism in a literal sense. this reflection interested me enough to provoke some speculation. after a dozen years, say, of the next way, there is likely to be a severe food shortage, particularly in meat. the food situation evolves to the point where there is not enough for both an imperialist country and the people of those countries so far liberated by it. who gets the food? don't be silly. besides, the latter have long since been scientifically proven little better than animals. still, a problem. food situation gets worse. even industrial workers of the imperialist state starve to death, most of the dogs and cats have been eaten, and two months may see a collapse of the economy. a brilliant idea is inevitable. the morale control is given a new set of directives for the alteration of a fairly venerable cultural attitude, divided into six phases. phase 1: the thesis that the occupants of inferior nations are little better than cattle is an error. they are *no* better than cattle. remarkably like cattle in some respects . . . you follow me, I hope, he said with an evil smile.

returning to the alligator. he caught the west turtle in about half a minute, jaws closing slowly and carefully over the turtle's flailing left leg. as soon as the turtle felt the alligator's touch he seemed to lose all hope and purpose, and relaxing, let the alligator draw him back. experience, perhaps. but I was frightened without knowing why. then I remembered that I didn't know the destination, or what the alligator was going to do to them there. what frightened me was the objective and tender care with which he caught the turtle's foot: the psychology or preparation for an orgy.

it seemed to me later that all these impressions—which I admit I can't correlate—were nevertheless somehow given a sort of unity by the reflection I had on a vague emotional surprise at the end: the further away from each other the turtles got, the better chance they had. corollary, the closer, the more involved they were with each other, the easier it was to control them.

what petty-bourgeois rubbish, I said. anarchism. even worse than those philistine epigrams you were making last year, like who guards the guardians of the revolution.

COMEDY ENTOMBED

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

YEAH, I know, I said. But I can't go three places "first."

When can you come then, he answered.

I told you I've already promised two people to see them as soon as I've had my breakfast. One of them is in Passaic. Why don't you get somebody nearer if you're in such a hurry?

Because I want *you*.

O.K. I'll get there around ten o'clock. Do you think she'll hold out that long?

I guess so. But you'll come?

Yeah, I'll come—as soon as I can make it. Put a kettle of water on the stove so we'll have it boiled later.

All right. You know where it is, don't you?

I'll find it.

There's a little wooden house behind the shoe shop between 4th and 5th. I'll be looking for you. You sure you'll come?

I'll be there. Oh Lord! I said hanging up the receiver.

Oh, said Floss, you'll probably get a big kick out of it. You're not so busy and you haven't done that sort of thing for years. Maybe it'll bring us luck. What is it, a straight maternity case?

No. A miss, from all I can tell.

What's the name so I can put it in the book?

Porphyrion, Principio—something like that. I'll tell you later. I never heard of them.

Why do you suppose they wanted you?

Probably haven't any money and heard I was an easy mark. But I'll do it.

Well, you promised them so you'd better.

There he was, sure enough, at ten sharp waiting on the street, coatless, with a narrow face and hair standing up straight all over the top of his head to make it seem still longer.

I felt a little self-conscious as I got out of the car in my light grey broad-cloth suit, a grey top-coat and went to follow him. The old car seemed large and costly in these poor surroundings, especially so before the little wooden house that looked more as if it had been made for children to play in than for adults. He led the way down a tiny brick paved courtyard. White paint peeling off the wide boards, the place looked to have been abandoned long since and later reclaimed.

That old familiar smell of dirt greeted me as we stepped inside the door.

It was a pleasant October day and the stove wasn't on full so there was no emphasis, but there wasn't a proper place to lay my coat. I chose a green painted kitchen chair folding the coat up into a little pudding so it wouldn't take up much room.

Watch your head on these stairs, said the man ahead of me. I waited a moment to arrange my coat.

Hello doc, said a boy of about ten coming to my side. What you here for?

Well, Sonny, why aren't you in school?

I got to stay home and take care of my mother.

Isn't your father here?

Yeah, he's here now. He kept woggling his head, looking down at the floor and then up at me with a foolish sly expression to his face, swinging his arms around as if it might be a clown imitating a monkey. I left him and taking up my satchel started to climb the stairs remembering just in time to bow my head. All short people in this house, I could see that.

At the top of the steep open stairway, which merely went up from a corner of the kitchen through the ceiling and landed you in the middle of a bedroom above, I came out between two large double beds standing there as if they had been two boats tied at opposite sides of a small basin—no carpet, no furniture. Seeing no one here I went through the only door to the other room at the back.

Here y'are, Doc.

There she lay in another double iron bed backed against a window. You could see her slender form under the old quilt and above it on the pillow a blond head and somewhat scarred, pointed face. A youngish woman, Polish in appearance. She didn't look particularly distressed. Quite the opposite.

Well, what's goin' on?

She's having a lot of pain, Doc. She was five months along and scalded herself on Sunday pretty bad. The pains started yesterday morning.

Here it comes again, she said and we stood like a couple of goofs watching her while her face got red and she gritted her teeth together and closed her eyes tight for a moment or two. Then she made a face and smiled again.

How often do they come? I asked her.

Oh, every five minutes. They're not so bad. But he thought he'd better get somebody—pointing at her husband as much as to say, It's his fault. We don't know what it is.

You know what it is, I said.

Yeah, I suppose so. But what's this lump I got here? I thought it might be a tumor or something.

Let's see. She pushed the covers down and pulled up the shapeless cotton gown she was wearing. It was a beautiful day, the sunlight pouring in through the side window. It seemed strangely appropriate to have the full

daylight on the matter—somehow. She had a funny half amused expression to her face almost comic at times.

Why that's just the uterus, the womb, you know, I said. What do you expect? When it contracts it sticks up that way.

I suppose so but, anyhow, I wanted you to see it. I never had anything like this before. You don't know me, do you?

No.

You brought one of the children ten years ago when we were living down at the Hill.

Sure enough.

When do you think it'll come? The membranes broke this morning early—as one might say, What's tomorrow, Wednesday or Thursday?

I didn't want to bother you, Doc, said the man. I'm used to these things, but it began to get pretty bad.

How many children you got?

Four. All boys.

This one was supposed to be a girl, smiled the woman, and turned her head on the pillow toward the sunny window.

Why don't you take her to the hospital? That's the only place for these cases. I hate to examine a woman in a room like this without any chance to have things the way I want 'em. You could go in the ward.

I don't want to cost my husband too much money, said the woman.

It wouldn't cost you a cent.

We can pay, he said. I'd rather have her here. How much will you charge me, doc?

Then she had another pain and everything stopped for a moment.

Say, these are coming pretty fast, I said. Let me take a look at that burn. She threw the covers down carelessly again, exposing her thin well formed body almost to the knees. There was an oblong piece of folded cotton rag held loosely in place by a narrow adhesive plaster strip above and below covering the length of the left thigh. I loosened one side of the lower strips and saw the burned area, it must have been close to a foot long with a big half shriveled blister in the center as big as the palm of your hand. I replaced the bandage. We'll leave that alone. Does it hurt much?

No. She seemed completely at ease lying there with none of the deformity usually so apparent in a maternity case at term, like a well woman in all her soiled sheets, good color, not greatly concerned about anything—and not unattractive. I remarked it again. If anything, rather an amused expression to her face than otherwise.

I guess it's a good thing, she said. We got enough already.

How much are you taking? said the man coming back to that.

Are you working?

Yeah, I get eighteen dollars a week but I haven't had more than three days recently.

What do you do?

I work for a house wrecking concern.

Is that so! Well, well, that's interesting. Floss was right. A house wrecking concern, eh. I want to hear more about that later. We got a house on our hands I'd like to see wrecked.

I can tell you anything you want to know. How much is it gonna be, Doc?

Well, I said, I don't know. How about ten dollars?

O.K. I'll get you some money. What else do you need?

Some cotton, I suppose. Have you got a couple of basins? A small bottle of Lysol—and that water.

Yeah, it's boiling.

What have you got on the bed?

Under her, you mean? We got a rubber sheet.

I tell you what, then. I'll be back in about half an hour. I got a couple of things to do and then I'll stop off home and get my maternity satchel.

Don't you want to examine her first, Doc?

I don't think so. We haven't a thing here I need.

But suppose it comes?

All right, I said. Let's see where we're at. I had thrown a pair of sterile gloves in the bag when I was first called on the chance that something like this would be happening. When I opened the bundle containing them I found one so rotten that it tore as I removed it from the container.

You don't need a glove, said the man.

I'll just put the other glove on my left hand. Come on wiggle over to this side of the bed. Give me a piece of soap and fill that basin for me.

I washed the woman off carefully, the sunlight full on my work, and made a quick pelvic. The cervix was still contracted.

Is that all? she said in amazement.

That's enough for now. I'll leave the glove here in this basin. Don't touch it. Just leave it there. We can add a little Lysol later. I'll be back in about half an hour, just as soon as I can make it.

That's all right, he answered. I got to walk down to the plant and get some money, it'll take me about that time to get back here too. I'll get the other things. But you'll be back sure, doc, won't you? I'll have the money. I won't have it all but I'll have a couple of dollars.

All right. And if anything happens while we're gone, I turned to the woman, you just stay where you are. Don't touch anything.

I know. All right.

In half an hour I was back again, as agreed. There was an old black and white cat in the sunny doorway who literally had to be pushed aside before

I could enter. As I pushed him away with my foot and kicked open the door—the boy came out from a sort of cubby hole back of the stove, staring.

Ooh! he said. You here again? and he looked down at the two bags. You scared me (though it was broad daylight). I thought it was some man pushed open the door to let the cat in. I noticed then that he was wearing a cowboy belt with a large size snapper pistol in it.

Two bags! he said with amazed emphasis. How many times you coming here?

How's your mother?

Oh, she's all right.

Get that cat out of here, I said to him then.

Get out, he yelled and closed the door behind the lazy beast.

I took my time to look around the kitchen a bit this time. The whole place had a curious excitement for me—nothing properly recognizable, nothing straight, nothing in what ordinarily might have been called its place. Complete disorder. Tables, chairs, worn out shoes in one corner. A range that didn't seem to be lighted. I didn't see the gas stove at that time. Every corner jammed with something or other of the rarest sort.

I have seldom seen such disorder and brokenness—such unrelated parts of things lying about. That's it! I said to myself. An unrecognizable order! Actually—the new! And so good natured and calm. So definitely the thing. And so compact. Excellent. And with such a patina of use. Everything definitely "painty." Even the table that was pushed away from the center of the room.

What you going to do to my mother? the boy asked.

Your father come back yet?

No. What you gonna do?

Just fix her up a bit, I said. I understand you got four boys in the family. No girls at all?

No girls except my mother.

That's right. And you're the oldest?

Yeah, I'm the oldest.

Upstairs again, through the bare bedroom. She looked just the same, damned attractive for some insane reason. I had to smile.

Anything happen?

Not yet. The pains seem to be getting worse, that's all.

I sat on the edge of the bed to wait. You haven't had any chills have you? Have you bled much?

So quiet, so lovely, so peaceful in that room. So strangely comforting. I couldn't make it out. Now the woman had another pain. I watched her.

They been coming that way right along?

About like that.

I sat on the foot of the bed and we talked and waited.

What's all that fluffy stuff on the screen, I said turning to the window.

Yeah, I was wondering about that too, said the woman.

Oh I see, it's from the meadows, cat-tail down. That wind we had the other day must have blown it up here.

When the husband came in with his supplies I removed my coat and took out my light rubber apron.

Now the butcher work begins! she smiled. What a woman! Everything's funny to her.

No, I said, I don't think so.

I know, she said, you gotta protect your clothes.

There wasn't much change in the situation. So the husband gave me the four dollars he had for me and we fell to talking about the house-wrecking job. I wanted to know.

Now the woman's pains seemed to come harder and harder.

Can't you give her something to ease the pain a little, Doc? said the man. Well, all right. These aren't very strong but they may give her a little relief. Take two of them now and a couple more later if it gets too bad. Just leave everything else the same. I got to get some lunch now, then I have office hours and after that I'll be back, around three o'clock if you don't call me sooner.

How's it going, said Floss a half hour later.

Just a five months' miss. She's all right.

What sort of people are they?

You can imagine.

Are they going to pay you.

Yes, he gave me four dollars. Said he'd bring me some more when he had it. By the way, here's something interesting, he's a house wrecker. What do you know about that.

Well?

It's an idea, isn't it?

Didn't I tell you something would come out of it? What did he say?

Oh, I didn't get much chance to talk to him but he said they go out of the state if it's worth their while.

Did you tell him anything about it?

Oh I mentioned it. It doesn't cost a lot of money the way we thought. He said it all depends on the house. It's the plumbing that makes it worth while. He says the lumber just lays. But the plumbing sells right off.

Did you tell him about the stone construction?

He said that don't make no difference. They'll level it off and even fill up the cellar if you have to have it that way. I'll ask him more about it when I go back.

Didn't I tell you? I knew it. When's it coming off?

I dunno.

What a day! At three P.M. there was the old cat as before obstructing the doorway. Inside, the boy was lying on the floor playing with a mechanical engine and cars. He didn't stir this time or even look up at me. I had to walk over his legs to get to the chair to rest my coat. Not a sound.

Where's your father?

He's upstairs.

I ducked my head instinctively this time in this small house.

As my head came above the floor the man got up from one of the children's beds rubbing his eyes sleepily. He was half dazed as I walked by him into the woman's room. She opened her eyes.

I must have been asleep, she said stretching and smiling pleasantly at me.

What's happened to the pains? I said.

It must have been those pills, she said. I had to take them twice but after that the pains all left me.

I heard a commotion downstairs and then a grand clambering on the wooden treads.

Get out of here! I heard the father say loudly. Go on the whole bunch of youse. Go downstairs. I had to go and look.

There they were, all four of them, the three youngest fresh from school standing around the stair head, staring at me, like so many pegs, in amazement. I'm hungry, one of them said. Go on, get downstairs. I'll get you something later. But he had to take them bodily, one at a time and push them ahead of him before he got them below.

What do you say, Doc? She all right?

Sure, leave her alone.

Am I sleepy, he said. Up all night and doing the cooking and taking care of her, I'm dead. I sat down beside the woman and felt her pulse.

Are you gonna examine me again? she said. No. That's good. It'll come when it gets ready.

Sure everything's all right, Doc? Those must be good pills you gave her.

Looks like it, even put *you* to sleep without taking one of them, huh? Have you bled any? I said to the woman.

No, nothing much. I feel good.

All right. I guess then I'd better move on. I got work to do. Call me when you need me.

We don't want to bother you, Doc. I'll watch her and let you know when it comes. I'm used to these things.

Say, about that wrecking business: how much does it cost to take a house down like I told you?

Nothin' at all. They'll *give* you a hundred dollars maybe or if anybody

else is bidding on it maybe they'll make it a hundred and twenty five. Lots of rich people are having big houses pulled down to get away from the taxes these days. We had one up at Tuxedo Park last month. You ought to see it. It won't cost you nothin'. Have you got a card with you? I'll have the boss call on you.

Better not do that. It's a mess though. Seven hundred dollars a year taxes and nothing coming in. Not so good.

Your own place?

No. My mother-in-law's.

Yeah, can't keep that up.

The kids were waiting for me at the foot of the stairs with open mouths. I rumbled the heavy blond head of hair of one of them and all smiled at me with their eyes as I said so long to the father and disappeared through the door.

It was four thirty the next morning when the phone finally rang. Four thirty! Of course. Aw right, aw right.

It's here, came the voice back to me. Take your time. She can wait till you come.

These are the great neglected hours of the day, the only time when the world is relatively perfect and at peace. But terror guards them. Once I am up, however, and out it's rather a delight, no matter what the weather, full of wonder to be abroad in the thoughtful dawn.

He was waiting for me in the semi-dark in his shirt sleeves at the curb and we went in together.

Upstairs the four kids were asleep in the big beds. Two were across the one at the right with their heads almost hanging over the edge. The older boys were on the other bed one one way, one the other, head to foot. There were no covers over any of them and they were only partly undressed as if they had fallen off in the act of removing their clothes.

In her bedroom he had the light lit. She was lying in the same position she had been in all day. It came right after he went to call you, she said. It's all over.

Good for you. Did you have strong pains?

Yeah, all night but as long as I knew it was all right I could stand it.

It's still in the sack, he said. It all came together.

He was right. The whole mess was intact. Through the thin walls of the membranes the foetus could be plainly made out. About five months.

Is it alive? he asked me.

No.

It was alive when it was born though, she said. I looked and I could see it open its mouth once like it wanted to breathe. What is it, Doc, she continued, a boy or a girl?

WILLIAMS

What do you want to know for?

I want to know if it's a girl.

I took my scissors and opened the membrane. It would have been a girl.

There, she said, you see. Now you've got your girl. I hope you're satisfied.

I haven't got any girl, he answered her quietly. Oh boy, he added, have I got a bellyache tonight. She laughed. Guess he's having a baby. He's worse than I am.

I feel like it, he said.

Maybe you are, I told him working over the woman, cleaning her up with his assistance as best I could and getting her bed in order.

You'd be more famous than the Dionne quintuplets, she smiled. You'd get your picture in the paper and talk over the radio and everything.

I'm hungry, yelled a sleepy voice from the other room.

Shut up, said the father.

FIVE POEMS

JEAN GARRIGUE

ORATION AGAINST AN ORATOR'S ORATION

From the mouth of that fanatical fire
Grew private senses fantastical,
Chalk shadows on the leaf-cold lawn.
He stood before the frost-stropped roofs
Where blackened leaves flopped round his head
Like crows no longer squawking in a wood.
He stood in the mobbed center, their haranguer,
Fop prophet, fop angel, their transformer,
This wing-haired being wooing their old sores.
His smile upon his words lit up his head.
The woody plane that drummed here now and then,
The broke pilasters and distempered court,
The ramps and trucks, hot congress of
The deuced dilemma, vermin, itch,
All that surrounds them as they are, is gone
As if he were an avenue of myth.
Some words are pistols that explode the head,
New shores unflag, build new and unplagued houses.
Their world is being made for them again.

But the function of the intellect is to move,
Move, move, against the blazing night,
Though the office of the sail be tired and dirty,
The water pocked and rabid, on the shore
The effecting of a promise that outbids
The actual coming of a gift or peace
Much as the hope outweighs the imported letter.

Move, move, I cried, his oratory is stale
And birds other than the starlings soar
Abused, abusing to the cloud.
Let them stream up and scatter all the cloud
You make them names, you cry battalions of names,
You set the cosmos in your own order
And clap them in that cosmos round your heads.

GARRIGUE

But there they stand like showcase smiles.
Rank and inert, they're not to be unmoored.
They stand as if he were Pythagoras
Who shines the window-glass of their thick world.
To those who think they comprehend by love
In all places he is seen at once, he is
Their green and carnal ignorance.

But, as wind swirling, moves shadow and birds,
Blowing the course of the bullet north degrees,
Planting its form on the thick tree
And becomes the tree, blowing a surf of leaves,
You birds come here, you birds dive, dive,
Now let one person, I myself, dare move.
O there is a swirl of thoughts the wind
Makes singular, there are the senses that extend
Until the blank eye is a life of green,
Gradations of a shade, there is the earth.

What living thing does not outgrace
A battering ram, a gross artillery,
A *p* over *t*, a junket of word-mouthed words?
I see the world, it's propped by argument,
Vast pillars set to support a windy pride,
Pediments acanthus-bound, entablatures,
All ways to keep the ego up and sun,
As if we couldn't bear the world
Unpropped, unbooked, and unreasoned.
O the appalling wreck, the disfigured world,
The moon all sliced, disheveled, disemboweled!
The fresh winds blowing whose vocals
Not now one instant curbs our grimy nouns
Or lets us hear one instant silences,
As if the senses could not bear the world
All naked, maculate and faulty
And five green senses then but all the Word.

THREE POEMS ON THE SAME SAD THEME

I

If love possessed us once
 What treason now employs our hearts in hate?
 It is a felony
 That both our hearts are critic dry with wit
 And tongues but good for talk.

Has age, or busyness or time
 Or repetition brought us this?
 Or are we wearied and crave
 Stronger effects to start awake the old
 Mortality in us?

Come! Aren't we wearied? To be
 More glad to go than stay,
 Bitter-adept as now we are,
 To scorn—insult, not praise,
 Rebuke with scalding injury,
 No tenderness but prideful lies?

But once, habitually we met
 Intent, invested like a dream,
 As if, two natural objects, we had been
 Enjoined to join.
 Acted we not volitionally?
 Sleep partakes of such a property—
 So fine is all the will,
 So fiery fine the senses then.
 O what's declared and registered,
 All but a literal paradise then scorned?

But that was then. And now—
 It's clear we meet to quarrel.
 Emotion that is not
 Exultance of a rage
 Drives us forth and back.
 With coldest eyes we dare
 The wound to kill, the ultimate death of those

GARRIGUE

Old selves that made big vows.
We scrape the moonlight off the house.
We throw our rings at walled lilies
Enseamed around the room's once old, old rose.

Our factored hearts incendiary—
So hot a thing is hate—
Begin ancestor-worship, praise
The lowly infinite!
If emeralds come from Colombia,
If rocks can change the discourse of a sea,
Have we degraded, disvalued
Love's necessary enmity
Or, exhausted true concourse,
Found import but a nullity?
Is it the realization of experience?
Is it the years' morality?

Love may breed from hate again
Or hate breed love anew
But there's a hatred that is whole
Which may not turn from its own soul
But, Narcissus-fascinate,
Repudiates the all.
Is this our ill?

II

To go into the morning like a thief
To ascertain one's spirit grief
And thence to kill one's love outright
That had bounded day in night
My soul, prepare! whose anguish' knows
To what exiling dark it goes.

To kill one's love that one may be
Mutinous in liberty
And walk forthright in coldest sorrow
Because one could not love the more
When faults and petty crimes haste all
Consumption of the false Idea!
Because what one had learned long to ignore

GARRIGUE

Becomes at last the ageless critic sore
And one must hate what injures now—
The past prove all deceptive—though
More bitter is the future that is null.
As for the present, it is powerful
With images begot of death and hell.

To go into the morning like a thief
Since one has now no right by any faith
To dare a robust, unflawed strength
For one, thenceforth, is but the heir of night
And fens and paths forbidden to the light.
To rob, kill, cast out primal joy
Because one must, through what necessity,
Abjure what cannot help one now.

III

If love must lose its action and its strength,
Then hail to ours, its mingy, dull decline!
Belabor me for making out last year
An icon false as any one-legged throne
And honor me who now have seen your eyes
For what they're worth and what they're not in me.

If love must lose its action and its strength
Is this then hate, this dearth of excited thought
Or death of the hope to see perfection grow
By bearing image 'gainst the false-sweet soul?
What have I to learn if it's not this
Or be if I cannot escape this heart of error?

What of the image that I spit on now?
It is because I loved what was not true.
I tear at my own images, not you
Who gave perfection you aspired not to
And thought you were what you'd not be at all.
Clown of the reason, mimic of the will!
I loved my imagery far more than you,
As partial as the seasons aren't, or death,
Until such fever threatened me I thought
Its venal fires would burn me all away.

GARRIGUE

Thus so disdaining prime reality,
Sufficient is the irony for me.

Now comes the essential, startling spring.
I'm covered to its brutal green,
Am like the dead, who cherish not one dream,
Am mythless as a scientist or beast.
A part of *mé* is like the great denier.
I can't identify myself with any mask.

But go to smell the moon and joke the trees,
Dispassionate and changeless like those rocks
Who're gashed from the old stone of earth,
Or squat and saurian inmates of such Farms
As where the poor go when they're almost gone
Prolonging painful lives for hateful guards.

A GLOOMY TALE

Between the womb and history
The aged man withstands
Physical delight and love and goes
Homeless and unwanted, into bed,
His beard awry, his hair a kelp,
And cuts upon his puckered head.

Too old for boxing or for dice,
He is the headband of his past,
He keeps his craven memories hid
With letters, clothes, in closets or in trunks.
In dreams they mock like mariners
The calm where now he is ensconced,
The dead-wood piers like broken forests where
In passionate calm he stares.

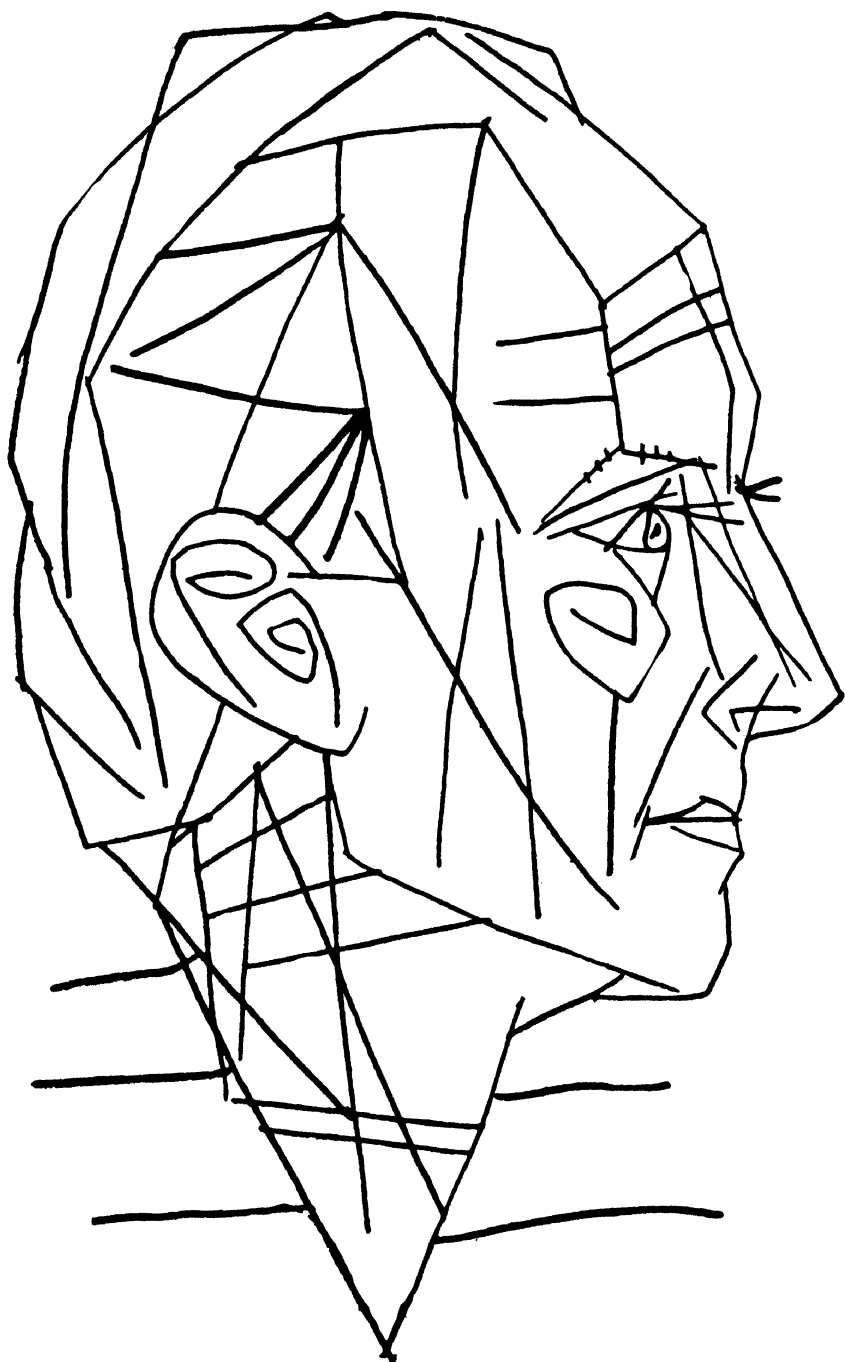
He recalls nothing that he was.
The past is what he must avoid.
Those images he fathered like a child
Are gone whose power was his pride.
The secret bargainings a basement toy
That cost no blush but cast no joy.

GARRIGUE

As all the boats and red-eyed gulls
Harm now his eyes; he cannot see so well.
O all's a calm, he cries he's in, whose storm
Is at the center of his null.
Groping with words, his hate disparate, he
Retches on experience now disowned
As vicious mother dogs who eat their pups
Must then disgorge them, tough and young.

He sits and looks upon his hands.
The Gorgon face is rife in him.
O frozen, frozen, like the berg,
His simile's the never-ravaged man.
But involuntary remembrance will
Ignite the past he packed away in trust.
Death will be a fireworks of old lust.

POEMS OF ELUARD



Eluard by Picasso

PAUL ELUARD—POET OF FRANCE

Some Preliminary Translations

*(Editor's Note: We offer here a selection of the poems written during the occupation of France by Paul Eluard, in preliminary translations. These versions are being rushed into print in order to pave the way for a later and more careful presentation of the work of this great poet. Our haste is occasioned by the publication, with a certain amount of partially justified trumpet-blowing, of the war-time verse of Louis Aragon. While Aragon is unquestionably an important poet, the idea that is being built up in American readers' minds that he is the poet of the French Resistance is far from accurate. The work of Eluard was known just as widely throughout France and exerted just as much influence; as time goes on it will exert greater influence because it is better poetry. The poems in this selection are taken from the volumes *Au Rendez-Vous Allemand* and *Poésie et Vérité* 1942.*

*Before the war Paul Eluard was a member of the Surrealist group and ranked as its finest poet. A few of his poems were published in translation in New Directions 1938. Reread today, they are still marvellously moving, remarkable for the dreamlike beauty of their strange images and the quality of feeling conveyed by cadences which come to the ear like half-remembered voices from the world of sleep. I had met Eluard several times in Paris in those days and though much impressed with his simple straightforwardness, which was so much in contrast to the deviousness or exhibitionism of some others of the Surrealist group, I would never have imagined that so quiet a man would later become one of the active leaders of the French Resistance. But you have only to read Eluard's great poem *Liberty* to see how the torment of France drove him to new heights of force and expression. Not only did Eluard write poems which were passed all over France, sometimes in little clandestine broadsides or papers, sometimes by word of mouth, but he also did actual organization work for the underground fighters and for the underground press. The occupation gave to a poet who was already a master technician subject matter for poetry which could speak to his contemporaries with a directness that has been denied to most other modern poets. It is the measure of Eluard's genius that he could become simple with no sacrifice of verbal beauty and that he could write, without falling to the level of the banal, the very obvious things which as a Frenchman under the boot of the Germans he had to say.*

Eluard is extremely difficult to translate, even in poems of simple statement, because of the original way in which he uses the French language.

First of all he constructs by association. Then he has evolved a syntax of his own—one which often dispenses with the conventional "operational" words like verbs, prepositions, relatives and the like in order that the meaning-words may act directly upon each other in their purest possible state. Eluard cleans words of their encrusted layers of association, rather in the way that MacLeish was doing in the New Found Land period, while at the same time he enshrines them in an atmospheric tone that echoes the sonorities of traditional French verse. To put that differently: on the semantic level he dissociates, while on the aural level he appeals heavily to what you might call race-sound-memory. He writes a subtly cadenced free-verse line which the ear easily accepts, but he places words together in new ways which compel the mind to react to them with fresh feelings and judgments. Unlike the method of an American Surrealist such as Charles Ford it is not the juxtaposition of incongruities to effect shock; the action is far less violent—it is one of suggestion. Eluard persuades you to follow him.

These are, as I say, preliminary drafts, provided through the kindness of a few poets who read French in the week which intervened between the arrival, after long delays, of a copy of Eluard's book in New York and our deadline for getting this book to press. It is planned to perfect these translations by later consultation, to add other poems to the group, including those of the pre-war period, and then to publish the whole in book form with the original French texts en face.)

LIBERTY

On my schoolboy's notebooks
On my desk and the trees
On the sand on the snow
I write your name

On all the pages I have read
And on all the blank pages
Stone blood paper or ashes
I write your name

On the golden figures
On the warriors' arms
On the crown of kings
I write your name

On jungle and desert
On birdsnests and heath flowers

ELUARD

Over the echo of my childhood
I write your name

On the wonders of night
On the white bread of day
On seasons betrothed
I write your name

On all my scraps of sky
On the pond musty sun
On the lake living moon
I write your name

Over the fields on the horizon
On the wings of birds
And on the windmill of shadows
I write your name

On every puff of dawn
On the sea and on ships
On the mad mountain
I write your name

On the foam of the clouds
On the sweat of the storm
On rain thick and savourless
I write your name

On sparkling shapes
On the bells of the colors
On physical truth
I write your name

On lively pathways
On far-stretching roads
On crowded squares
I write your name

On the lamp that is lighted
On the lamp that has gone out
On all my houses together
I write your name

ELUARD

On the fruit cut in half
On the mirror and my room
On my bed empty seashell
I write your name

On my dog greedy and loving
On his cocked ears
On his clumsy paw
I write your name

On the springboard of my door
On all familiar things
On the torrent of holy fire
I write your name

On the body that is given
On the foreheads of my friends
On every outstretched hand
I write your name

On the window of wonders
On listening lips
High over the silence
I write your name

On my shelters destroyed
On my crumbled beacons
On the walls of my boredom
I write your name

On absence without desire
On naked solitude
On the steps of death
I write your name

On health regained
On vanished risk
On hope without memory
I write your name

And by the power of a word
I begin my life again

ELUARD

For I was born to know you
And to name you
Liberty.

(translated by J. Laughlin)

NOTICE *

The night which preceded his death
Was the shortest night of his life
The idea that he was still alive
Burned his blood to the wrists
The weight of his body was sickening
His strength made him groan
And it was in the depth of this horror
That all at once he began to smile
For he knew that he did not have one comrade
But millions and millions of comrades
Who would avenge him his death
And the light of day rose for him.

(translated by J. Laughlin)

COURAGE

Paris is cold Paris is hungry
Paris no longer eats chestnuts in the streets
Paris is dressed in old cast-off clothing
Paris sleeps standing up in the stifling subway
Still more misery is beaten down onto the poor
And the wisdom and the folly
Of unhappy Paris
Is the pure air and the fire
The beauty and the goodness
Of her starving workers
Don't cry for help Paris
For you are alive with an incomparable life
And beneath the nudity
Of your pallor and wasting
Everything that is human is revealed in your eyes
Paris my lovely city
Delicate as a needle strong as a sword

* "On the housewalls in the streets of Paris the Germans spread 'Notices,' threats, lists of hostages, which frightened some people and made everyone ashamed."

ELUARD

Innocent and wise
You will never tolerate injustice
That for you is the only evil
You will free yourself Paris
Paris trembling like a star
Our hope which survives
You will free yourself from weariness and slime
Brothers have courage
For we who are not helmeted
Nor booted nor gloved nor well brought up
Something is catching fire in our veins
Our light returns to us
The best among us have died for the rest of us
And now their blood finds its way back into our hearts
And it's morning again a morning of Paris
The dawn of deliverance
The time of the newborn spring
Idiot strength is beaten down
Those slaves our enemies
If they have understood
If they are capable of understanding
Will rise.

(translated by J. Laughlin)

LET HIM WHO WILL, UNDERSTAND

*At that time, to spare the guilty, women were abused.
They went as far as to shave them.*

Let him who will, understand
But my remorse was
The wretch who remained
On the pavement
The sensible victim
Her dress torn
Her stare like that of a child lost
Discrowned disfigured
The one who resembles those dead
Who died to be loved

A girl made for a bunch of flowers
And covered

ELUARD

With the black spit of darkness

A girl as loose
As the dawn of a first of May
The most lovely beast

Soiled and not understanding
That she is soiled
A beast caught in the trap
Of the amateurs of beauty

And the woman my mother
Would like to fondle
That ideal image
Of her misery on earth

(translated by André du Bouchet)

WOODEN AND WICKED

Coming from within
Coming from without
These our enemies
Coming from above
Coming from below
From near, far
Right, left
Dressed in green
Dressed in gray
Jackets too short
Coats too long
Crosses crooked
Big, their guns
Short, their daggers
They pride in their spies
Are strong with killers
And full of spite
Armed to the ground
Armed under the ground
Stiff at salute
Stiff with fear
Before their shepherds

ELUARD

Wet with beer
Soused with moon
Solemnly singing
The song of boots
They have forgotten
The joy of being loved
When they say yes
Everything answers no
When they speak of gold
Everything is lead
But in their shadow
All shall be golden
And no one will be old
When they go, when they die
Their deaths shall suffice

* * *

The men we love
Shall escape
We shall take charge
On the morning of victory
Of a new world
A world set right

(translated by Lionel Abel)

IN A BLACK MIRROR

Halo teeming
With the days of the finest month of August
In an overcrowded district

Halo of our wishes
Sparkling with impatience
Hot with our anger

* * *

In the rue de la Chapelle
Walls of a school-house
Riddled made airy with bullets

The only flowers of the street
White with the flesh they spared

ELUARD

On the walls of misery

All the thoughts opening out
All the eyes to see clearly
On walls at last sensitive

In the rue de la Chapelle
On the walls at last marked
With the living imprint

With the desire to be free.

(translated by André du Bouchet)

CRITICISM OF POETRY

The fire awakens the forest
The trunks the hearts the hands the leaves
Happiness in a single bunch
Mingling airy melting sugared
It is a whole forest of friends
Gathering around the green springs
Of the strong sun of the blazing wood

Garcia Lorca has been put to death

House of a single word
And of the lips joined for living
A tiny child without tears
In his eyeballs of lost water
The light of the future
Drop by drop it fills the man
Up to the transparent eyelids

Saint-Pol Roux has been put to death
His daughter has been tortured

City frozen in similar angles
Where I dream of fruits in bloom
Of the entire sky and of the earth
Like virgin discoveries
In a game which never ends

ELUARD

Withered stones walls without an echo
I shun you with a smile

Decour has been put to death

(translated by André du Bouchet)

NAZI SONG

The foolish flight of a butterfly
the window the escape
the interminable sunlight
the inexhaustible promise
which disregards bullets
and circles the eyes with a shudder

the tree is new the tree is bleeding
my children it is spring
the last of the seasons
hurry up and use it
it is the chaingang or prison
the firing-squad or the front line

for mothers the last holiday
the heart yields let us salute
everywhere death and misery
and Germany overthrown
and Germany crouching down
cowering in blood and pus
of the wounds she scooped out
now our job is done

Thus they sing they sing well
our good masters the assassins

(translated by C. F. MacIntyre)

ON THE LOWER SLOPES

As low as the silence
Of a corpse planted in the earth
Nothing but darkness in the head

As monotonous and deaf

ELUARD

As autumn in the pool
Covered with dull shame

The poison bereft of its flower
And of its gilded beasts
Spits its night on men

(translated by André du Bouchet)

TRAINED BY FAMINE

Trained by famine
The child always answers I eat
Are you coming I eat
Are you sleeping I eat

(translated by André du Bouchet)

A WOLF

The good snow the sky black
The dead branches the torment
Of the woods full of snares
Shame to the hunted beast
Is the arrow flight in his heart

The tracks of a cruel prey
Steel the wolf and it is always
The most beautiful wolf and always
The last alive that threatens
The bulk absolute of death.

(translated by William Carlos Williams)

A WOLF

The day astonishes and the night fills me with fear
Summer haunts me and winter pursues

A beast has rested his paws
On the snow on the sand in the mud
His paws come from far beyond my own steps

ELUARD

On a chase where death
Wears the imprint of life.

(translated by William Carlos Williams)

UNCERTAIN OF THE CRIME

One rope one single twist one sole man
Strangled ten men
Burned a village
Swallowed a people

The she cat who makes part of life
Like a pearl in its shell
The gentle cat has eaten her kittens.

(translated by William Carlos Williams)

CURFEW

So what the door was guarded
So what we were imprisoned there
So what the street was barred off
So what the town was under attack
So what she was famished
So what we were without arms
So what night had fallen
So what we made love.

(translated by William Carlos Williams)

FROM THE OUTSIDE

The night the cold the solitude
I had been carefully shut in
But the branches sought their way into my prison

All about me the grass found the sky
They bolted up the sky
My prison crumbled
The living cold cold that scorches took possession.

(translated by William Carlos Williams)

ELUARD

FROM THE INSIDE

First commandment of the wind
The rain encloses the day
First signal for us to spread
The clear veil of our eyes

Before a house standing alone
In the wake of a kindly wall
At the bosom of a greenhouse asleep
We gaze on a velvety fire

Outside the earth is defamed
Outside the lair of the dead
Crumbles and slips in the mud

A flayed rose turns blue.

(translated by William Carlos Williams)

from THE WEAPONS OF SORROW

It is the mother who speaks:

I had built three castles in our oaths
One for life one for death one for love
 I hid like a treasure
 The puny little sorrows
 Of my pleasant and happy life

I had woven three coats in mildness
One for both of us and two for our child
 Our hands were the same
 And we thought for one another
 We made the earth look more beautiful

I had reckoned three lights in the night
Falling asleep they all mingled
Son hope and flower mirror eye and moon
Man without savour but clear in speech
Woman without brightness but fluid in her fingers

Suddenly it is the waste
 And I get lost in darkness
 The enemy has shown himself
 I am left alone within my flesh
 I am left alone to love.

(translated by André du Bouchet)

BIENTÔT

Of all springtimes
 This is the ugliest
 Of all my sanguine moods
 The best

Blades of grass raise the snow
 Like the stone of a tomb
 But I sleep through the storm
 And awake with shining eyes

The lingering little season is finished
 Every street must lead
 Into my most intimate retreats
 So that I may meet someone

I don't hear the monsters speak
 I know them they have said it all
 I see only beautiful faces
 Good faces sure of themselves

Sure of destroying their masters soon.

(translated by M. P. M. Hutchins)

THE HOSTILE POEM

In the sovereign inequality
 It is the turn of the master to flee
 Devoured by hatred
 It is the turn of the master to board
 His golden galley his makeshift boat

Devoured by hatred
 That fruit whence grows the wheel the wheel whence grows the road

ELUARD

The road where a corpse grows and death takes shape
In blood and mud that unburied corpse
Would crack under the tooth of a harsher winter
What did the dead man want to eat and drink a little
To love to dream and laugh under a lenient sky
In the sovereign inequality
And in the cool grass flowery with dawn
To be that couple who loved without thinking of it
To be that couple heavy in belly and in pleasure
Devoured by love and who sing very loud
We are the light and our heart is radiant
We are on the earth and we thrive on it

While the other devoured by hatred
Is a prey to earth to men and to beasts
And earth and men and beasts are himself
Utterly devoured by hatred

The rotten blood of death fills his heart
The virtuous denial of love chills his forehead

(translated by André du Bouchet)

THE SAME DAY FOR ALL

I

The sword which is not sunk in the heart of the masters of the guilty
is sunk in the heart of the poor and the innocent

The first eyes are those of innocence
and the second of poverty
these must be protected

I don't want to condemn love
except if I do not kill hatred
and those who have inspired it

II

A little bird is walking in vast regions
where the sun has wings

III

She was laughing all around me
around me she was naked

She was like a forest
like a throng of women
around me
like armor against the desert
like armor against injustice

Injustice was striking on all sides
single star unmoving star of a heavy sky which is the lack of light
Injustice was striking down the innocents and the heroes the madmen
who will one day know how to rule

Because I heard them laughing
in their blood in their beauty
in misery and under torture
laughing with a laughter to come
laughing for life and being born for laughter.

November 19, 1944

(translated by C. F. MacIntyre)

THINK

Think without shame of those places
where men are shut in
where the absent ones are present
where the eyes reflect no light

Everything takes swiftly the color
of dull lilies of the ceiling
of blue wheat of the overseers
lilies blue wheat on the outside
in ineffaceable sadness
a bit of bread some dirty water

Why are we living why
let us abolish our past
and blaspheme our future
let us console ourselves like beasts

ELUARD

singing Those up in the air
have much the air of shabby wretches

Liberty to do what
for our masters not for ourselves
in order to keep us in shackles
to keep us in emptiness
to conquer us and teach us
to consent without the nobility
of Reason which makes man great

without the Reason of brotherhood.

(translated by C. F. MacIntyre)

CHARNEL-HOUSES

Dawn has come out of a cut-throat den
Dawn blackens among rubbish
Melts among flabby shadows
Among abject foods
Among repulsive secrets

Where are the laughters and the dreams
Where are the flowers of the skin
Where is the steady motion
The wheel of the sun and of the sap

Aromatic roots
Cut through rotten flesh
The heart is no longer the signal image
Dawn no longer waters the mud
It is the poison of chaos

Where are the flames and the sweat
Where are the tears and the blood
Where are the stare and the voice
Where is the rallying cry

Understanding lies dead under grubs
Under the chewing buzz of the flies
Sky earth are closing

ELUARD

Upon the destruction of man
Vision sounds nothing but darkness

* * *

Darkness passers-by hurry
Better to recover their darkness
Intact filled to the cracking point
With that old pus of the blessed
Contradicting every famine
Denying evil and tortures

Darkness the hangmen are far away
And their accomplices take it easy
Blind looks dull foreheads
Jewels covering a stinking hole
Flowers of cunning low stars
Convenient forgetfulness sublime forgetfulness

Treasure piled up without disgust
By the winners of the defeat
Small gains great ruins
Darkness ignored by the worms
Precious ashes in the bottom of pockets
The future hangs on a few pennies

High living is worth the shame
The cold sings like a thief
And old crimes keep you warm
The hangmen vindicated death
They borrowed time
They did not fear the children

* * *

But on night the daughter of man
Beams the revenge of love
Dawn is woven of limpid threads
The innocent have reappeared
Light with pure air white with anger
Strengthened by their imperishable right

Strengthened by a faultless earth.

(translated by André du Bouchet)

DAWN DISSOLVES THE MONSTERS

They did not know
That the beauty of man is greater than man

They lived to think but thinking were silent
They lived to die they were useless
They regained their innocence in death

They had put in order
In the name of wealth
Their sorrow their beloved

They were munching flowers and smiles
They could only find hearts at the end of their rifles

They did not understand the curses of the poor
The poor without troubles tomorrow

Sunless dreams were making them eternal
But to change the cloud into mud
They came down taking their heads from the sky

All their night their death their beautiful shadow sorrow
Their sorrow for others

We shall forget these immaterial enemies

For soon a multitude
Will repeat the pure flame in soft voices
The flame that is ours ours alone enduring
For the two of us everywhere the kiss of the living

(translated by J. Laughlin)

THE SEVEN POEMS OF LOVE IN WARTIME

*"I write in this land where they pen men up in filth
and thirst, silence and hunger . . ."*

—ARAGON (Le Musée Grévin)

I

In your eyes a ship
mastered the wind

ELUARD

your eyes were the land
that suddenly we find again

your patient eyes were waiting for us

'neath the trees of the woods
in rain in torment
on the snow of the peaks
twixt the eyes and games of children

your patient eyes were waiting for us

they were a valley
softer than a single blade of grass
their sunlight lent a weight
to the thin harvests of mankind

were waiting for us to see us
forever
for we were bringing love
the youth of love
and reasoning of love
the wisdom of love
and immortality.

II

Day of our eyes, athrong with people
more than the greatest battles

cities and garden-cities
of our eyes victorious over time

in the cool valley burns
the sun liquid and strong

and on the grass the pink
flesh of springtime preens.

* * *

Evening has closed his wings
on Paris in despair

ELUARD

our lamp holds up the night
as a prisoner his freedom.

III

Spring flowing sweet and bare
night opening everywhere
the night when we unite
in feeble foolish fight

* * *

the night insulting us
night when the bed is hollow
empty of solitude
future of agony.

IV

A plant it is that knocks
at the door of the earth
a child it is that knocks
at his mother's door
it is the rain and sun
that with the child are born
that grow up with the plant
flourish with the child

I hear them speaking sense and laughing

* * *

they figure out the hurt
that they can do a child
so much shame before he vomits
so many tears before he dies

Noise of footsteps 'neath the vault
black and gaping wide with horror
they come to uproot the plant
and to debase the child

with poverty and boredom.

V

Heart's corner, they politely said,
the corner of love and hate and glory
we answered and our eyes reflected
the truth that was our refuge

we never did begin
we always loved each other
and since we love each other
we want to free the rest
from their icy solitude

we want, I say I want
I say you want we want
the light to shine forever
from couples bright with virtue
from couples with the shield of daring
because their eyes see face to face

and their purpose is the life of the rest.

VI

We do not sing you trumpets
the better to show to you misfortune
just as it is so big so stupid
and stupider by being whole

to death alone we looked
only the earth our bound
but now it's shame
that walls us up alive

shame of the boundless evil
shame of our ridiculous butchers
still the same, still
the same lovers of themselves

shame of the trains of tortured
shame of the words scorched earth

ELUARD

but we aren't ashamed of our suffering
but we aren't ashamed to be ashamed

behind the fleeing soldiers
not even a bird is alive
the air is void of sobbing
void of our innocence

resounding with hate and revenge.

VII

In the name of the forehead perfect deep
in the name of the eyes I look into
and of the mouth I kiss
today and evermore

In the name of buried hope
in the name of tears in the dark
in the name of complaints that make us laugh
in the name of the laughter that terrifies

in the name of the laughter in the street
of the tenderness that binds our hands
in the name of fruits after the flowers
on the beautiful good earth

in the name of the men in prison
in the name of the women deported
in the names of all our comrades
martyred and massacred
for not accepting the shadow

we must drain away our anger
and lift the iron up
to keep the memory high
of the innocent everywhere hounded
who everywhere shall triumph.

(translated by Paul Goodman)

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF AUGUST

Right in the middle of August a Monday evening of delicate color
 A Monday evening hung from the clouds
 In Paris bright as a new egg
 Right in the middle of August our country at the barricades
 Paris daring to show her eyes
 Paris daring to shout victory
 Right in the middle of August a Monday evening

Since they have understood the light
 Could this evening darken to night
 Since hope arises from the pavements
 Rises from foreheads and lifted fists
 We shall enforce hope
 We shall enforce life
 On despairing slaves

Right in the middle of August we forget the winter
 Just as people forget the politeness of conquerors
 Their deep bows to misery and death
 We forget the winter just as people forget disgrace
 Right in the middle of August we hoard our ammunition
 With good reason and the reason is our hate
 O breach of nothing indispensable breach

The sweetness of being alive the sorrow of knowing
 That our brothers have died that we may live free
 For living and making life are at the root of us all
 Here is the night here the mirror of our dreams
 Here midnight midnight point of honor of night
 The sweetness and the grief of knowing that today
 All of us together have compromised night

(translated by Hubert Creekmore)

THE STANDSTILL OF THE HOURS

Measureless words gently spoken
 Full sunlight the shutters closed
 A great ship threading the water
 Her sails dividing the wind

ELUARD

Mouth well formed to hide
Another mouth and the sworn vow
To speak nothing except two-voiced
Of the secret that stabs the night

The one dream of the innocent
One murmur on a single morning
And the unison of the seasons
Staining with snow and with fire

A mob at last made one

(translated by D. Fitts)

ENTERRAR Y CALLAR

Brothers this dawn is yours
This dawn that lies along the ground
Is the last of all your dawns
In it you are bedded down
Brothers this same dawn is ours
Upon this deep abyss of grief

And with our hearts and indignation
Brothers we cling fast to you
We would make it last for ever
This dividing dawn that cleaves
Your tomb which is both black and white
Hope and despair

Hatred rising from the ground
And combatting for love
Hatred in the dust
Having fulfilled love
Love ablaze in full daylight
Sees at all times hope on earth.

(translated by D. Fitts)

GABRIEL PÉRI

A man died whose only defense
Was his arms outstretched to life
A man died whose only course

ELUARD

Was one of loathing guns
A man died who still struggles
Against death against forgetting

All that he wished for
We wish for too
We wish for it today
For happiness to be the light
Deep in the eyes deep in the heart
And justice over the earth

There are some words that give us heart
And these are innocent words
The word warmth the word trust
Love justice and the word liberty
The word child and the word kindness
And certain names of flowers and certain names of fruit
The word courage and the word discover
And the word brother and the word comrade
And certain names of countries villages
And certain names of women and friends
To these add Péri
Péri died for what keeps us alive
Let's tell him with affection * his breast is pierced
But thanks to him we know ourselves better
Let's say with affection among ourselves * his hope is living.

(translated by Hubert Creekmore)

KILLING

Tonight there falls
A strange peace over Paris
A peace of blind eyes
And colorless dreams
Knocking against walls
A peace of useless arms
And conquered brows
Of men who are far away
And women already withered
Pale cold and unweeping

* "Tutoyons-le" . . . "Tutoyons-nous."

ELUARD

Tonight there falls
In the silence
A strange glow over Paris
Over the good old heart of Paris
The hidden glow of crime
Premeditated savage and pure
Of crime against the butcher
And against death.

(translated by J. Laughlin)

TO HER OF WHOM THEY ARE DREAMING

Nine hundred thousand prisoners of war
Five hundred thousand political prisoners
A million forced laborers

Mistress of their slumber
Give them the strength of men
Gladness of being on the earth
Give them in their great darkness
The lips of a soft love
Like forgetfulness of their suffering

Mistress of their slumbers
Girl and woman sister and mother
Whose breasts are swollen with kisses
Give them our country
As they have always loved her
A country crazy with life

A land where the wine sings
And the harvests are hearty
Where the children are cunning
And where the old men are finer
Than fruit trees white with blossom
A country where you can talk to women

Nine hundred thousand prisoners of war
Five hundred thousand political prisoners
A million forced laborers

ELUARD

Mistress of their slumber
Black snow of white nights
Through a bloodless fire
Holy Dawn with a white cane
Show them a new road
Outside of their wooden prisons

They have paid the full price to know
The worst forces of evil
And still they have kept good
They are riddled with virtues
As many as their wounds
Because they have to survive

Mistress of their rest
Mistress of their waking
Give to them liberty
But keep for us the shame
Of having believed in our shame
Even to annihilate it.

(translated by J. Laughlin)

A SHORT PLAY ABOUT JOSEPH SMITH, JR.

MAUDE PHELPS HUTCHINS

"JOSEPH SMITH . . . (1805-1844), the founder, in April, 1830, of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, was born in Sharon, Vermont, on the 23rd of December 1805. He was killed by a mob in a jail at Carthage, Illinois, on the 27th of June 1844."

—*Encyclopaedia Britannica, Eleventh Edition.*

"There shall not any man have save it be one wife, and concubines he shall have none, for I the Lord God delighteth in the chastity of women . . . For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people, otherwise they shall hearken unto these things."

—*The Book of Mormon* (which is a translation, dictated by Joseph Smith with the aid of a pair of supernatural spectacles, of the golden plates dug up by him after three conversations with the Angel Moroni).

Coffee and tea are forbidden in the *Book* but Joseph Smith recognizes expediency.

The Idea

The play should consist of many wives and JOSEPH SMITH. By their conversation and behavior his story should be told. He is warmly and gratefully loved by them all. A lack of passion is noticeable, however. It is a friendly love they have for him. It is straight and just and forgiving without patronage or jealousy. It is neither maternal nor childish but it is satisfactory. The presence of one sweetheart wife, very recent, very young and very romantic, should not disturb the impression of satisfaction and womanly appeal of the play, but act as a reminder and foil for the audience without annoying it.

The very recent sweetheart wife DEIRDRE cannot understand what she thinks of as the attitude of the many wives. She does not understand or appreciate or desire their peace and every-day contentment. She is amazed that they are not jealous of each other and that they do not envy her. She is amazed especially at their lack of envy of her although she is constantly unhappy, frightened and dissatisfied.

JOSEPH SMITH is courteous and good to his many wives. Each of them appears to receive his undivided attention although it is not obvious or studied. He pets and plays with his recent sweetheart wife but at no time is he overcome by his emotion for her. Her own emotion makes him shine

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in her eyes, and his speech and gestures she thinks belong to her, making her momentarily happy in his presence, but to the audience it is clear that he has no preference. It is also clear that his life at home does not interfere with his life as a prophet and that his many wives do not object to his special calling; neither are they impressed by it.

The Prologue

The scene is a winter landscape, with a brown house in the foreground, a hill in the background. JOSEPH SMITH is surrounded by some children and some neighbors.

FIRST NEIGHBOR: Hi, Joe.

JOSEPH SMITH: Hi.

CHILDREN: Uncle Joe, don't do in.

JOSEPH SMITH: Lurch.

SECOND NEIGHBOR: Been slidin'?

CHILDREN: It's wonderful today. It's wonderful today.

JOSEPH SMITH: We had fun.

FIRST NEIGHBOR: I thought you was a prophet.

SECOND NEIGHBOR: Do prophets slide down hill with the children?

JOSEPH SMITH: I am a prophet only when acting as such. (*He goes in. There is a general dispersal.*)

The Play

SCENE: *The dining room in the brown house. There is a refectory table in the center. About the room are chairs of many designs—one or two rockers, a couple of slipper chairs with footstools, a handsome antique or two, a ladder back, a Windsor, a painted Sheraton, some ordinary kitchen chairs and even a love seat.*

As JOSEPH SMITH comes in the wives are in motion. One is pouring water in glasses, one is arranging a few flowers, one is coming through the swinging door from the pantry. Three are seated talking animatedly, one is standing behind her chair embroidering inside a little hoop; one is stooping trying to see herself in a tiny mirror on the wall. There seems to be plenty to do but it is being done without confusion. The sweetheart wife is sitting very straight in her own special chair. She is the only one who appears to be tense with waiting. Her cheeks are very pink. The others notice JOSEPH SMITH's arrival slowly, but DEIRDRE jumps to her feet and quickly steps up to him.

DEIRDRE (*in a high sweet voice*): My love.

JOSEPH SMITH (*touching her cheek but looking evenly at all*): Hello.

ALL THE WIVES: Hello, Joe.

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Hello, Joseph.
How d'ye do, Joseph.
Mr. Smith.
God bless you, Joseph.
Well, Joe.

DEIRDRE (*feeling him*): So cold.

MARY (*taking his gloves*): There'll be some hot soup.

ELLEN (*taking his coat*): Was it good sliding today?

LOUISA (*taking his scarf*): Your neck is wet; you'll catch your death.

JANE (*picking up his galoshes as he kicks them off*): Nasty things—they're soaking wet. I'll put them in the oven.

DEIRDRE: No—I!

JANE (*with a laugh*): You've just manicured your nails.

DEIRDRE (*placing the backs of her hands close to his face*): Smell—Jinny.

JOSEPH SMITH (*kissing them neatly*): Pretty. . . . What happened to Frieda?

A WIFE: A headache, Mr. Smith.

JOSEPH SMITH: And Katherine?

ANOTHER WIFE: Shopping, Joseph.

DEIRDRE (*flushed and impatient*): Please, Jinny.

JOSEPH SMITH (*kindly*): Five minutes, Deirdre. I'm hungry.

DEIRDRE (*angrily*): You don't love me. (*The other WIVES continue as before and do not appear to notice the conversation. DEIRDRE and JOSEPH SMITH might be alone.*)

JOSEPH SMITH: Yes I do.

DEIRDRE: No you don't.

JOSEPH SMITH: I love my Deirdre.

DEIRDRE (*insistently*): Best?

JOSEPH SMITH: Best.

DEIRDRE (*insistently*): Of all?

JOSEPH SMITH: All.

DEIRDRE: All? All?

JOSEPH SMITH (*laughing*): Baby.

DEIRDRE: Tell me. All all?

JOSEPH SMITH: All all.

DEIRDRE (*standing so that he cannot reach or see the others*): Jinny.

JOSEPH SMITH: I've been so busy.

DEIRDRE: You went to Jane last night.

JOSEPH SMITH: I couldn't have.

DEIRDRE: I heard you.

JOSEPH SMITH: Then I must have, but I thought I was writing a sermon.

DEIRDRE (*almost in tears*): You're laughing at me.

JOSEPH SMITH: No, little one.

DEIRDRE: Tonight.

JOSEPH SMITH: I must write my sermon tonight if I didn't write it last night, and you tell me I didn't write it last night.

DEIRDRE (*in tears, running into the pantry*): Oh!

JOSEPH SMITH (*sorry but not affected*): Ellen—how are the children?

ELLEN: Well, Joseph. Only Henry has the croup again.

JOSEPH SMITH: Did you use the kettle?

ELLEN: Oh, yes.

MARY (*interrupting*): Kathleen is a darling, Joseph. Couldn't you stop in our wing this evening and see her?

JOSEPH SMITH: Of course, Mary.

JANE: I didn't have quite enough muslin for my frock, Joseph. May I?

JOSEPH SMITH: Speak to me tomorrow, Jane. (*A snowball hits the window with a thwack and flattens out.*)

LOUISA (*jumping up*): That'll be Victor. (*She opens the window and calls.*) Victor! Go in with the others. Don't do that, Victor! (*to JOSEPH SMITH*) If you would please speak to him, Joseph. He really is getting unmanageable.

JOSEPH SMITH (*placidly*): I will, Louisa.

(*The WIVES are about seated, some by agreement serving the others, when the street door is pushed open by KATHERINE, her arms full of bundles, her face happy. She lets go her packages, leans over JOSEPH SMITH and kisses him while her eyes look over the table.*)

KATHERINE: I am exhausted. I am hungry.

JOSEPH SMITH (*fondly, with his arm around her waist*): My greedy wife. My smart girl.

KATHERINE: Let go, Mr. Smith. I am starving.

JOSEPH SMITH (*not letting go*): How much did you spend, Cricket? Must I have a revelation to pay the bills? (*The others smile at what appears to be an old joke.*)

KATHERINE: Let go.

(*There is a slight scuffle. JOSEPH SMITH lets go her waist and flips her bottom with his napkin as she turns away; he holds it in his right hand and snaps it through his left like a boy in school.*)

KATHERINE (*to JANE*): I found you some beautiful muslin, Janey.

ELLEN: Did you get me my cotton thread No. 22?

KATHERINE (*to ELLEN*): Yes, I did and a spool of silk. It was not so dear. (*to MARY*) I didn't have time to look for you know what, Mary.

MARY: But I need them.

JOSEPH SMITH: Need them?

KATHERINE and MARY (*together*): Joseph Smith, don't be curious.

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JOSEPH SMITH: What is a them?

LOUISA: He knows perfectly well.

JOSEPH SMITH: Show me, Louisa.

LOUISA (*looking as if she would*): I shall!

JOSEPH SMITH (*delighted*): Show me, Louisa. Show me what Mary needs so badly and Katherine didn't have time for.

LOUISA (*jumping up, blushing and excited*): I shall, Joseph Smith, I shall!
(*The Wives are all laughing like a lot of little birds.*)

JOSEPH SMITH: One to . . .

Two to . . .

Three to . . .

And four to *show!*

(LOUISA *raises her skirts high and from the pantry door comes a wail. DEIRDRE is standing there.*)

DEIRDRE: Jinny! (*Everyone more or less shrugs. The fun is over but DEIRDRE is not criticized.*)

JOSEPH SMITH (*quieting down*): Deirdre, baby. Come and eat something.

DEIRDRE (*sobbing with her face in her hands*): No, no, no! Oh, how disgusting. Oh, how disgusting. You are all disgusting.

(*No one replies; things are being passed. Steps are heard coming down the uncarpeted stairs, and FRIEDA appears. She is pale.*)

FRIEDA: What is all the noise? My poor head.

JOSEPH SMITH: Good day, Frieda. What ails my tall girl—are you better?

FRIEDA (*kissing him in a frail manner*): I'm awful, Joey, but what is happening?

MARY: I fixed you, Frieda, and pulled the shades and now you get up. No wonder you always have a headache, no wonder at all.

JOSEPH SMITH: You aren't fat enough, Frieda.

FRIEDA: I can't help it.

JOSEPH SMITH (*going about his meal*): Eat.

FRIEDA (*restless*): What was happening?

ELLEN (*raising her eyebrows toward DEIRDRE who still stands in the door*): Nothing.

(JOSEPH SMITH *finishes a mouthful, wipes his mouth, sits back and looks at FRIEDA.*)

JOSEPH SMITH: Come here, Frieda.

FRIEDA (*coming to him and standing listlessly between his knees*): Don't make me eat, Joey.

JOSEPH SMITH: I promised your father I'd fatten you up. What does she weigh, Mary?

MARY: Practically nothing, Mr. Smith, in her shift.

JOSEPH SMITH (*making love to her*): My pale and lovely Frieda. (FRIEDA

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bends her head and whispers in his ear. Then she speaks to the others.)

FRIEDA: I am going up again if nothing is going on. *(She glances at DEIRDRE in the doorway who is staring at her in misery, and then she wanders out.)*

JOSEPH SMITH *(continuing his meal)*: I'll bring you a cup of tea.

THE WIVES *(mildly shocked)*: Teal!

JOSEPH SMITH: It is expedient, my dears. *(Perhaps he feels a little guilty about DEIRDRE because he goes on.)* Deirdre, baby, you shall have a cup, too.

(DEIRDRE gives up her post in the pantry door and comes and kneels beside him. He lifts her face, looks into her eyes and kisses her mouth. She is happy.)

DEIRDRE *(gently)*: Jinny—

JOSEPH SMITH: Yes.

DEIRDRE: Do you love me?

JOSEPH SMITH: Yes, silly.

DEIRDRE: Then don't go to Frieda.

JOSEPH SMITH: What?

DEIRDRE *(pleading)*: Please don't, Jinny.

JOSEPH SMITH: Don't what?

DEIRDRE: Go to Frieda.

JOSEPH SMITH *(kissing her)*: Frieda needs me.

DEIRDRE *(wildly)*: I need you!

JOSEPH SMITH *(soothingly)*: Deirdre needs me.

DEIRDRE *(calmer)*: I love you.

JOSEPH SMITH *(absently)*: Deirdre loves me.

(DEIRDRE is happy for a while. Her head is on his knee. He is stroking her hair. The meal is about over, things become quiet and JOSEPH stares out into space. As the feel and rhythm of his hand changes DEIRDRE looks up at him without raising her head. The others are quietly gossiping. JOSEPH SMITH looks as if he saw a vision. The many wives are quiet but not impressed. DEIRDRE loves him with her eyes now as she sits back on her thighs. Then JOSEPH SMITH gets up, looks vaguely around and speaks in a businesslike way.)

JOSEPH SMITH: I shall go to the temple now. I may be a little late this evening for supper, Mary. *(He starts to go, then murmurs.)* Frieda's tea.

DEIRDRE *(jumping to her feet)*: I'll take Frieda's tea to her, Jinny. I'll make it now. I'll take it to her, Jinny.

(MARY and ELLEN interrupt his rapt walk to the door.)

ELLEN: Oh, Mr. Smith.

JOSEPH SMITH: Yes? Yes, Ellen.

ELLEN: If the general store is open, please bring me five pounds of stewing apples.

MARY: Sour ones.

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JOSEPH SMITH (*writing in a little book*): Yes? Yes, Ellen, Mary, apples.
(*There is a pause.*) But there is a probability I may be called out of town
tonight. (*He goes out.*)

ALL THE WIVES: Goodbye, Joe.

Goodbye, Joseph.

Goodbye, Mr. Smith.

God bless you, Joseph.

Goodbye, Joey.

FIVE POEMS

PHILIP LAMANTIA

SCENARIO

Blood stains velvet
as a girl passes like smoke
through the heavy air
. . . passes like smoke
to the drunken sailors

It's strictly contemporary here
nothing archaic except velvet
(and the blood spills over it)

nothing but fast love
and fast death

The man and the woman in the circle
dancing a samba

First the quiet doping and casual loving
next the brawl:
with the Don Juans
and the queens
breathing for paradise to come

The early morning brings
a taste of ash in the mouth;
welts and wounds;
the anal-erotics yelling for air

Mirrors broken; bottles of gin
slung from one table to another;
an elegy written across the window

The last to leave is the girl at the bar
passing in the dawn like smoke

Dressed in velvet
happy and bitten

LAMANTIA

she waits for the noise and the crowds
of the next night . . .

FROM DARK ILLUSION TO LOVE'S REALITY

I take to a caryatid coming alive
(whose marble still falls from her hair)
moving over the ruins of cities

Her life is ephemeral
in her shadow I walk as the most melancholy
blinding the sun with a sweep of my lashes

Within her life ends as swiftly as a dream
and the future seems worse than the past
and no better than the present

From the depths of an uprooted earth
no longer light forms
but frozen waste is scattered everywhere

In this desperate night I submerge
toward an incarnate body in the sea
revealed to me, without pangs, as love

(My caryatid returns to her frieze
tracing like snow in the air
an image of decay)

I take from the sea this magnetic heart
(as the sun moves within us)
to follow the pulsebeats of love

THE FIRST AND THE LAST

You flee into a corridor of stars
you sleep in a bleeding tree
and awaken upon the body of trance

The night flees like a bird possessed by fire
pieces of night scatter in an alcove of ghosts
where a comet is our symbol and space our illusion

LAMANTIA

We are two loves, two feathers blown over water,
our garments washed upon the sands,
our bodies flung to the rocks

I meet you in the solitude of violence
take you as a vapour and flow as blood
in your body of music and haunted flesh

INFERNAL LANDSCAPE

A window that never ends
where infant eyes are unhooked
from the paper clown
who stands on a shattered mirror
picking rocks from his heart

In the absence of light
pulled through mist
my eyes are imprisoned

And the sun has regained its lions
whose flesh cover the earth
who know solitude is a flavor
of the polar night

But it is a criminal hand
that obscures the shadow of clowns
and the skeleton of solitude
It is this hand hiding in smoke
or burnt flesh
kissed and re-kissed, sucked of flames
that is consumed in lust

A hand that grows of its own accord
giving thunder to sleep
as moonlight like a sword
cuts through its bracelet of animal entrails

Eyelids open as mouths
nourishing the criminal hand
Its fingers play upon water from thighs
whose serpents plunge into my body

LAMANTIA

Sand passes in the heart of the hand
as diamonds in a lake

SYMBOL

Upon the earth eyes opened in wonder
as trees flowed within me
and dreams followed snow

No longer did I see torture
or hate, coiled like a snake
ready for the constant attack
—on man himself, imprisoned
fearful of the sun's power

born in uncertain times
of myth and death

There was no feverish cry
from the depths, or from above
and I knew this was the island
of an exiled heart

Yet this island is before us always
from life to life
from minute to minute
in a state of change,
eternal as the primal images

The world never sees itself
never regards its love,
believes itself protected
and forms a pattern of evil

But those who see everything at once:
a cosmos, designed, ordered
in the rhythm of a heartbeat,
love the image, but not the myriad worlds
wasting away under a symbol of death

It is here: the whole, of which the parts
are both mirror and picture

L A M A N T I A

From a window I see the world
as I would see love
as I would see you
as I would see myself

This act of vision
is an act of love

I speak among you
as I would among the dead.

IL TRATTO DE APELLE

BORIS PASTERNAK

Translated by Robert Payne

They say that when the Greek artist Apelles discovered that his rival Zeuxis was not at home, he drew a line on the wall, so that Zeuxis would be able to guess who it was who had come in his absence. Zeuxis did not remain long in debt to his fellow-artist. He chose a time when Apelles was known to be away from home and left his mark, which became the proverbial sign of art.

I

ON one of the September evenings when the sloping tower of Pisa led a whole army of oblique colours and sidelong shadows against Pisa, when all Tuscany, irritated by the night wind, smelt like a frayed laurel held between the fingers, on one of these evenings, I even remember the date—23rd August—on this evening Emilio Relinquimini, not finding Heine in the hotel, demanded paper and light from the obsequiously fawning lackey. And when the lackey reappeared, bringing beside the objects he had been asked for an ink-bottle and a pen-holder, a seal and a stick of wax, Relinquimini dismissed him with a gesture of the utmost fastidiousness. Taking the pin from his tie, he placed it over the candle and waited until it was white hot, pricked himself in the finger and, taking one of the innkeeper's cards from a pile of similar cards, he bent it round the end of his bleeding finger. Then he handed it nonchalantly to the lackey with the words, 'You are to give Herr Heine this visiting card. To-morrow I shall visit him at the same hour.'

The leaning tower of Pisa had pushed its way through a chain of medieval fortifications. The number of people who could see it from the bridge were increasing every minute. The red glow of the sky, like a poursuivant, crawled along the square. The streets were blocked with tiptilted shadows, some of which were still fighting in the narrow alleyways. The tower of Pisa continued its march, mowing everything down, until at last one insane, gigantic shadow covered the sun. The day broke into pieces. And meanwhile the lackey, briefly and confusedly informing Heine of his recent visit, succeeded several minutes before the final setting of the sun in presenting the impatient guest with a card bearing a coagulating yellow stain.

"What an original!" But Heine immediately guessed the name of the visitor, who was the author of the famous poem '*Il sangue*.' The accident by which Relinquimini arrived in Pisa from Ferrara on exactly the same day that Heine arrived from Westphalia—obeying the even more capricious whimsy of a poet on his holidays—this fortune did not seem strange to him.

He remembered the anonymous person from whom he had received several days before a negligently written, defiant letter. The claims of the unknown passed the frontiers of the permissible. Speaking vaguely about the blood-call of poetry, the unknown demanded of Heine . . . his Apelles-like *pièce d'identité*. Love (wrote the unknown), this cloud stained with the blood which often overlays our cloudless blood . . . you must speak of it in such a way that it will be as laconic as the signature of Apelles. Remember only that you belong to the aristocracy of spirit and of blood (these things cannot be separated). This is the only thing about which Zeuxis is curious.

P.S. I have profited by your stay in Pisa, of which I was so opportunely informed by my publisher Conti, to put an end once and for all to my tortures of conscience. Within three days I shall come to you and look at the signature of Apelles.

The servant who appeared at the summons of Heine was given the following communication:

"I am taking the ten o'clock train for Ferrara. To-morrow evening, the bearer of the card, who is already known to you, will ask to see me. You will personally hand him this parcel. Please let me have the bill and call the *facchino*." *

The ghostly weight of the parcel, which was apparently empty, was nevertheless due to a thin sheaf of papers, obviously selected from some manuscripts. And this sheaf of papers comprised only a part of a phrase, without beginning or end: "But Rondolfina and Enrico have discarded their old names and changed them into names hitherto unprecedented: he cried wildly, 'Rondolfina,' she replied 'Enrico' † . . ."

II

On the paving stones, on the asphalt market-places, on the balconies of Pisa and the embankments of the Arno, the inhabitants lit the scent of a Tuscan night. Out of the burning darkness of the night, the scent lay heavily on the suffocating passage-ways, and under the dust-laden plane pine trees; and its burning, glittering splendour was crowned with scattered sheaves of light from the stars and clusters of thorny mist. These flashes of light overflowed in the bowl of Italian patience: from the heat of their fervour they uttered curses, as though they were prayers, and wiped the humid sweat from their brows before they had even glanced at Cassiopeia. Handkerchiefs gleamed in the dark like shaken thermometers. The readings of these cambric thermometers spread perniciously along the streets: they diffused oppressive heat, like snatched-up rumours, like

* Porter; in Italian in the original.

† This sentence is in verse in the original.—*Translator's Note.*

panic fear. And just as the stagnating town disintegrated unconditionally, the streets, the houses, the courtyards, so in the same way the night air was compounded of separate and motionless collisions, ejaculations, bloody quarrels and encounters, whispers of laughter and drooping voices. Those echoes existed in dust-laden and frequent *interweavings*: they stood out in rows, which grew out of the pavement like the trees in the street, suffocating and colourless in the light of the gas-flares. Fantastically and powerfully, the night of Pisa traced a limit to human endurance. Beyond these frontiers chaos began. Such a chaos reigned over the railway station. Here handkerchiefs and curses disappeared from the scene.

People to whom a moment before a simple and natural movement would have seemed a torture, here, clinging to their bags and parcels, bellowed at the ticket office and like madmen stormed the charred carriages, made siege on the footboards and, covered with soot so that they looked like chimney sweeps, hurled themselves into compartments partitioned by burning brown veneer which appeared to be warped by the heat, by the violent language and the incessant jolting of the passengers. The carriages were burning, the sleepers were burning, the naphtha tanks and the locomotives in the siding were burning, even the signals were burning, while the engines from far and near uttered their lamentations through the steam. Hobbling with flashlights, like a buzzing insect, the heavy breath of the open furnace fell asleep on the engine driver's cheeks and the leather jacket of the fireman: the engine driver and the fireman were both burning. The clock dial was burning, the iron crossbars of the speedometer and the minute hands were burning; the watchmen were burning. All this was beyond the range of human endurance. All this could be endured.

.

A seat by the window. A moment later—an entirely deserted platform formed of massive stone, massive rumbling sounds and massive exhortation from the guard: *Prontil!*—and the guard runs alongside in pursuit of his own exhortations. The columns of the station slip smoothly away. Lights scurry along, intermingling like knitting needles. Gleams of light from the reflectors catch the carriage windows, caught up by the draught, proceed through, beyond and across the opposite windows, lie along the line, trailing, slide on the rails, rise and disappear behind the cart-sheds. Dwarf streets, misshapen and hybrid corners—the jaws of the viaduct swallow them with a hollow roar. The blustering of approaching gardens close to the blind. The restful space of the curling carpet of vines. Fields.

Heine travels in a happy-go-lucky fashion. He has nothing to think about, he attempts to doze, he closes his eyes.

"Something will certainly come of it. There is no sense in making guesses about the future, no sense and no possibility of a solution. The future is always a delightful mystery."

The wild oranges probably in flower. Scented gardens overflowing. From where the breeze temporarily sleeps on the close-clinging eyelids of the passenger.

This is playing for safety. Something will certainly come of it. It can't be without reason—Heine yawned—that in all the amorous poems of Relinquimini, there is the unchangeable annotation: Ferrara.

Rocks, precipices, his neighbours crestfallen in sleep, the stench of the carriage, the tongues of gaslight. The gaslight licks the rustling noises and shadows from the ceiling, it licks itself and is out of breath when rocks and precipices are followed by a tunnel: the rumbling mountain creeps down along the roof of the carriage, spreads smoke from the engine, drives it through the windows, clings between racks and pegs. Tunnels and valleys. A road with a single cart-track wails monotonously above the small mountain river which breaks against the rock, and rushed down from some improbable heights, fast invisible in the darkness. And here the waterfalls smoke and churn, and all night their strident rumbling encircles the train.

The signature of Apelles. . . . Rondolfina. . . . Probably I shall not succeed in a single day. And I have no more time. I must hide without leaving a trace. . . . To-morrow. . . . And how he will run to the station when the lackey informs him of my journey!

Ferrara! The blue-black steely dawn. The sweet-smelling mist saturated with coolness. O, how sonorous is a latin morning!

III

"Impossible, the issue of *Voce* is already in page-proof."

"Yes, but I refuse to surrender my discovery to anyone or for any money; meanwhile I can't stay in Ferrara for more than a day."

"You say this notebook was in the carriage under the seat?"

"Certainly, the notebook of Emilio Relinquimini, a notebook possessing a large number of manuscript pages and an immense quantity of unpublished poetry, rough copies, fragments, aphorisms. The entries were made throughout the year, mostly in Ferrara, as far as can be judged from the dates written underneath."

"Where is it? Have you got it?"

"No, I left my things at the station, but the book was in the travelling-bag."

"A thousand pities! We might have been able to send the book to the

house. The publishers know Relinquimini's address in Ferrara, but he has already been away for a month."

"What if Relinquimini is not in Ferrara?"

"That's the trouble. I really can't understand how you can hope to succeed by publishing an advertisement on this discovery of yours."

"Just this—with the help of your newspaper it may be possible to arrange a trustworthy liaison between myself and the owner of the book, and Relinquimini may at any moment profit by the courteous services of *Voce* in the affair."

"Then there is nothing to be done with you. Please sit down and have the kindness to make a declaration."

"I'm so sorry to worry you, but the telephone—will you allow me?"

"Do anything you like."

"Hotel Torquato Tasso? Could you let me know whether you have any rooms free? What floor? Good, reserve number eight for me."

"*Ritrovamento*. The manuscript of a book by Emilio Relinquimini, recently prepared for publication, has been found. The person occupying room number eight in the Hotel Tasso will be expecting the owner of the manuscript or his representatives, while staying in the room throughout the day until eleven o'clock at night. Commencing with the following day the publishers of *Voce*, in common with the directors of the hotel, will periodically and in good time be informed by the above-mentioned person of each change of his address."

Heine was tired by the journey and slept a dead and leaden sleep. The venetian blinds of his room, warm with the breath of morning, were like copper membranes of a mouth-organ burning. A net of light from the small window fell on the floor, taking the shape of a ravelled straw mat. The straw closes its ranks, crowds together, squeezes together. On the street—faint conversations. Someone loses the train of his thoughts, someone else gathers them together again. The straw is already compressed into a single mass and already the straw mat has become a pool of sunlight spilled on the floor. An hour passes. On the street men are talking nonsense, they nod their heads; on the street voices are being lulled to sleep. Heine sleeps. The sunlight pool is let loose: it seems that the inlaid floor is impregnated with it. Once more it is a thinning straw mat of singed and crumpled straw. Heine sleeps. Conversations on the street. Hours pass. They grow lazy, together with the black patches on the straw mat. Conversations in the street. The straw mat fades, is covered with dust, grows dull. Already it is an old string mat inextricably entangled. Already it is impossible to distinguish the threads and the stitches from the knots. Conversations on the street. Heine sleeps.

In another moment Heine will wake up. In another moment Heine will

slip out of bed, remember my words. Let him but see the last chapter of his dream to the end. . . .

Desiccated by the heat, the wheel suddenly cracks as far as the nave. The spokes protrude like a cluster of split pegs, the barrow falls to one side with a thump and a crash, bales of newspapers fall out—a crowd, sunshades, shop windows, awnings—they take the newspaper boy away on a handcart and the chemist's shop is nearby.

Look! What did I say? Heine leaps up. "Immediately!" Someone is knocking at the door furiously and impatiently. Heine, half awake, his hair tousled, still in his cups, reaches for his dressing-gown. "Excuse me a moment!" With an almost metallic rattling his right leg fell heavily on the floor. "I'm coming at once!" Heine walked to the door.

"Who is there?"

The voice of the lackey.

"Yes, yes. I have the manuscript. Give the signora my apologies. Is she in the drawing-room?"

The voice of the lackey.

"Ask the signora to wait ten minutes. In ten minutes I shall be entirely at her disposal. Do you hear?"

The voice of the lackey.

"Wait a moment."

The voice of the lackey.

"And don't forget to tell mademoiselle that the signor expresses his sincere regret that he is unable to join her this very minute, that he feels deeply sorry, but he will try. . . . Do you hear?"

The voice of the lackey.

" . . . but in ten minutes he will try to make complete amends for his inexcusable inadvertence . . . and say it very politely, lackey, because I am not from Ferrara."

The voice of the lackey.

"Very good, very good. Lackey, is the lady in the drawing-room?"

"Yes, signor."

"Is she alone?"

"Alone, signor, if it pleases you. On the left, signor. On the left."

"Good morning, what can I do for the signora?"

"*Pardon.* Are you from room number eight?"

"Yes, that is my room."

"I have come for Relinquimini's notebook."

"Allow me to present myself—Heinrich Heine."

"Excuse me, are you related to the . . . ?"

"Not in the least. An accidental coincidence. Even an embarrassing one. I too have the pleasure . . ."

"You write poetry?"

"I have never written anything else."

"I know German well and spend all my leisure reading poetry, but . . ."

"Do you know the poems which are unpublished during the poet's lifetime?"

"Of course. Now I realise who you are."

"Forgive me, but I have an ardent desire to know your name."

"Camilla Ardenze."

"Extraordinarily pleased. Now, signora Ardenze, did you happen to see my advertisement in the *Voce*?"

"Of course. All about the notebook which has been found. Where is it? Give it to me."

"Signora! Signora Camilla, you—perhaps with all your heart—celebrated by the incomparable Relinquimini . . ."

"Don't! We are not on the stage."

"You are mistaken, signora. We spend our whole lives on the stage and it is only with the greatest difficulty that some of us assume the naturalness which is bequeathed to us, like the character of an actor on the day of our births."

"Signora Camilla, you love your native town, you love Ferrara, but (I must tell you this) it is the first town I have ever come across which definitely repels me—you are beautiful, signora Camilla—and my heart shudders at the thought that you and this detestable town are both conspiring against me."

"I fail to understand you."

"Don't interrupt me, signora—this town, I was saying, which lulled me to sleep like the poisoner who lulled to sleep his boon-companion when the hour of his fate draws near, doing it in order to awaken a spark of disdain with regard to his fate in the eyes of the unhappy man who has just entered the tavern, and fate betrays the man who has been lulled. Milady, the poisoner turns to the woman who enters—look at the lie-a-bed: it is your beloved; he beguiled the hours of waiting with stories about you; they were like spurs when they pierced my imagination. Did you not gallop here on its back? Why did you whip it so unmercifully with your gossamer whip? It is lathered in sweat—it is in heat!"

"O these stories! But allow yourself to glance at him. Milady, he is lulled by his own stories about you—you see, the separation has the effect of a lullaby on your beloved. However, we can awaken him. It is not necessary, the poisoner answers for the fate of the man who was poisoned. Needless to alarm him. He sleeps so sweetly and perhaps he even sees me in his dreams. Far better to arrange that I should be provided with a glass of punch. It is cold in the street. I am numb. Please rub my hands."

"You are very strange to me, Herr Heine. But continue, please, for your highfalutin speech entertains me."

"Excuse me if I have forgotten Relinquimini's notebook. I shall go up to my room . . ."

"Don't trouble, I won't forget about it. Continue, please. What an amusing man. Continue. 'Please rub my hands,' said fate. Isn't that what she was saying?"

"Yes, signora, and many thanks for listening so attentively."

"Well?"

"Well then, this town has treated me exactly as the poisoner treated his boon-companion—and you, beautiful Camilla, are on the side of the town. The town overheard my thoughts of crumbling dawns, as old as robber castles and as solitary, and it lulled me to sleep because it wanted to take advantage of them stealthily, and it allowed me to speak to my heart's content about gardens, borne on immense sails from the red evening air into the night, and it hoisted the sails and left me lying in the port-tavern, and I am sure you will refuse to allow it to awaken me, if the craft rogue should propose such a thing."

"Listen, my dear. Where am I in all this story? I do hope the lackey definitely woke you."

"Ah, so you think the night comes, there may be a storm, one must hurry, the time is up, don't wake him."

"O signor Heine, what illusions you have! I say yes, yes, Ferrara, ruffle his hair if he is still asleep; I have no time, rouse him roughly; assemble all your crowds; rumble in all the city squares; rumble until he is awake, there is so little time."

"Ah, but the notebook. . . ."

"We'll talk about that afterwards."

"O my dear signora, Ferrara has been cheated in its calculations, Ferrara has been duped, the poisoner runs away, I am awakened, I am awake—I am on my knees before you, my love."

Camilla leapt.

"Enough! Enough! All this becomes you—even these commonplaces—yes, precisely these commonplaces! But it can't go on! You are acting like a wandering buffoon! We are almost strangers to one another. Only half an hour ago—it would be funny even to argue about this—and still—and here am I arguing with you. I have never felt more stupid in my life. This whole scene is like a Japanese flower which blossoms instantly in the water. No more and no less! But they are paper flowers! Such cheap flowers!"

"I am still listening to you, signora."

"Signor, I might have listened to you all the more willingly. You are

very clever and, it appears, sarcastic. And yet you have no contempt for commonplaces! It is strange but not at all contradictory. Your theatrical pathos!"

"I beg you, signora. Pathos in Greek means passion, but in Italian it is only an empty kiss. And kisses are compulsory—" *

"Again! Spare your pains! Intolerable! You are hiding something from me—explain yourself. And listen, please don't be angry with me, my dear signor Heine. For all that—you do not blame me for my familiarity? You are such an unusual child. No, that is not the right word—you are a poet. Why didn't I think of the word at once? But to discover it, it was indeed sufficient to look at you. An idler chosen by God and spoilt by fate."

"*Evviva!*" Heine leaped on to the window-sill and leaned out with his whole body.

"Careful, signor Heine!" Camilla cried. "Careful, you are frightening me!"

"Don't trouble yourself, my dear signora!"

"*Aicè! Furfantol!* † Catch him!" Lyres flew over the square. "Only stay a moment! You will receive ten times as many if only you rob a dozen gardens in Ferrara. A *soldo* for each hole in your trousers! Quickly! Don't breathe on the flowers when you are carrying them. The countess has a mimosa-like sensitiveness. Hurry, you old fool!"

"Did you hear it, enchantress? That ragamuffin will return in the costume of Cupid. But let us speak seriously. What perspicacity! With a single line—the line of Apelles—I have to express all my being, all that is essential to my existence!"

"I don't understand you. Or is this one more piece of play-acting? What is it you really want?"

"Yes, one more piece of play-acting. But why am I not allowed to stay for a while under the rays of a perfect illumination? Am I at fault because the most dangerous places in life—bridges and crossroads—are illuminated more strongly than any others? How crude is the light! All the rest is submerged in darkness."

"Imagine a stage with a man illuminated by perturbed flares, as though he were on exhibition—a man enclosed within balustrades, the panorama of the town, precipices and the signal lights on the quays."

"Signora, you would not have listened to one half of what I have to say if we had not encountered one another in such a dangerous place. I am obliged to imagine that it is dangerous, although I have myself no knowledge of its danger: it is necessary to imagine it, because whole seas

* *bacozzo*.

† *Rogue*: in Italian in the original.—*Translator's Note*.

of flame were exhausted by people in imagining it, and it is not my fault if we are illuminated so clumsily and crudely."

"Good. Have you finished? All that is true. But it is all unheard-of nonsense! I want to confide in you. It is not just my fancy. It is almost a necessity for me. You are not lying. Your eyes don't lie. Yes, what is it I wanted to say? I have forgotten. Wait a moment. Listen, my dear, only an hour ago . . ."

"Wait, these are only words. Hours exist, but eternities exist too. Quite a large number of them and not one has a beginning. At the first opportunity they break away. And this now is a good opportunity. And then away with words! Do you know, signora, when and by whom they are cast down? Away with words! Such revolutions are known to you, signora? Signora, all my fibres rise within me and I must yield to them, as one yields to the crowd. And one more thing. Do you remember what you called me just now?"

"Yes. I am quite prepared to repeat it."

"Quite unnecessary. And you know how to look freshly. And already you are in possession of the line, the unique one, like life itself. Don't lose it, don't throw it away on me, repel it only as much as it will allow you to. And then trace the line farther.

"What did you get, signora? What is the result? Are you in profile? Or half-face? Or in some other way?"

"I understand." Camilla stretched out her hands towards Heine. "And ye—no, I am no longer a young girl. One must have control over oneself. Such magnetism."

"Signora!" Heine exclaimed theatrically at the feet of Camilla. "Signora!" he exclaimed in a piercing voice, while he hid his face in his hands. "Have you already drawn the line?"

"How terrible!" He sighed in a whisper, tearing his hands away from his face which had suddenly grown pale . . . looking into the eyes of the completely disconcerted signora Ardenze, noticing to his unspeakable surprise that . . .

IV

. . . that she was really beautiful, that she was beautiful to the extent of being unrecognisable, that the pulse of his own heart throbbed like the sea under the stern of a boat, surges, rises, pours close to the approaching knees, rolls over her in lazy layers of waves, sways her silk dress, stretches the smooth contours of her shoulders, lifts her chin and—miracle!—gently raises it a little, higher and higher—the signora is now up to her neck in his heart, a wave more—and she will choke and be drowned. Heine seized

the drowning woman—a kiss—a kiss which bore them out of the whirlpool, but he groaned under the pressure of their breaking hearts, twitched and tore himself upward, forward, devil knows in what direction: and she offered no resistance at all. On the contrary if you desire her, her body sings, attracted by the kiss, straddled by the kiss, her outstretched body sings; if you desire her, I will be a boat for such kisses, only carry me, carry me . . . The words burst apart with a hoarse sound from Camilla's breast. "A knocking at the door!" "A knock at the door!" and she tears herself away from his embrace.

Then:

"A thousand devils! Who is it?"

"The signor has locked the drawing-room, God knows why. It is not the custom here."

"Silence! I shall do as I please."

"You must be ill, sir."

There followed swearing in Italian, sensual, fanatical swearing, like prayers. Heine unlocked the door. The lackey in the corridor had already come to an end of his swearing, and a short distance behind him there was a little ragamuffin whose head was blossoming out into a small forest of liana, oleander flowers, orange-blossoms, lilies . . . "This good-for-nothing . . ." roses, magnolia, carnations.

"This good-for-nothing asked to be allowed to enter the room which has windows overlooking the square, and the only room of the kind is the drawing-room."

"Yes, yes, the drawing-room," the boy snarled.

"Naturally, the drawing-room—" Heine agreed. "I myself told him . . ."

"Because," the lackey continued impatiently, "there could be no question of letting him into the office, the bathroom or still more the reading-room. However, owing to the obvious indecency of his costume . . ."

"Ah, yes," Heine exclaimed, as though he had only just at that moment woken up. "Rondolfina, look at his trousers! Who sewed those breeches of yours out of fishing-nets, a transparent conglomeration . . . ?"

"Signor, the thorns of the prickly hedges in Ferrara are sharpened every year by special gardeners."

"Ha! ha! ha!"

" . . . In view of the obvious indecency of his costume," the lackey continued impatiently, laying special emphasis on this last expression because he saw the signora approaching: on her eyes there wrestled the shadow of a sudden perplexity with gleams of a wholly unquenchable mirth. "On account of the indecency of his costume, we suggested to the boy, trans-

ferring to our person the demand made by the signor, that he should wait for the answer in the street. But this little swindler . . ."

"Yes, yes, he is right," Heine said, bringing the orator to a full stop. "I ordered him to appear personally before the signora."

"This swindler," the angry Calabrian was babbling, "even began to threaten us."

"Precisely how?" Heine asked. "Isn't this terribly characteristic, signora?"

"The little brat referred to you. Signor, he threatened us, he said that the signor merchant would make use of other *albergi* in the course of his travels through Ferrara if, in defiance of his wishes, he wasn't allowed to see the signor."

"Ha! ha! ha! What an amusing person! Don't you agree, signora? You will carry this tropical plantation, wait a moment!" Heine, turning round, waited for Camilla's orders. "To room number eight," Heine continued without receiving any reply from her.

"In your room, for the moment," Camilla repeated, blushing a little.

"All right, signor. But what about the boy . . ."

"As for you, you monkey, what do you think your trousers are worth?"

"Julio is covered with stripes, Julio grows blue with cold, Julio hasn't any other clothes, Julio has neither father nor mother . . ." the ten-year-old ragamuffin whimpered tearfully and sweatily.

"Answer, how much?"

"A hundred *soldi*, signor," the boy exclaimed diffidently and dreamily as though hallucinated.

"Ha! ha! ha!" they all laughed. Heine laughed, Camilla laughed, even the lackey burst out laughing, the lackey particularly when Heine bringing out his pocketbook, produced a ten-lire note and without ceasing to laugh offered it to the little ragamuffin.

As quick as lightning the boy's outstretched hand dived at the outstretched pocketbook.

"Stop!" Heine shouted. "This is, it appears, your first appearance in the field of commerce. In good time . . . Listen, *cametiere*, your laughter at such a time is positively indecent. It stings the young merchant to the quick and don't you think, my dear fellow, it would be better if, in your future negotiations in Ferrara, you never showed yourself again within the inhospitable walls of the 'Torquato'?"

"Oh, no, signor, on the contrary. How many days is the signor still staying in Ferrara?"

"In two hours I shall have left."

.

"Signor Enrico."

"Yes, signora."

"Come out in the street. It is so much better to leave the stupid drawing-room."

"Good. *Cameriere*, these flowers—to number eight. Wait a moment, this rose must still blossom; for this evening the gardens of Ferrara will ensure that you have it, signora."

"*Merci*, Enrico. . . . This black carnation is really devoid of all reticence; the gardens of Ferrara, signor, entrust you with the care of this licentious flower."

"Your hand, signora. . . . *Cameriere*, take it to number eight. And bring my hat. You'll find it in the room."

The lackey went out.

"You are not doing this, Enrico. . . ."

"Camilla, I don't understand."

"You will stay. Oh, don't answer me—you will stay at least for another day in Ferrara. . . . Enrico, Enrico, you have sullied your brow with pollen, let me wipe it away."

"Signora Camilla, there is a fluffy caterpillar on your shoes, may I dispose of it? I shall send a telegram to my home in Frankfurt—and those petals on your dress, signora—I shall send telegrams every day until you refuse to let me do it any more."

"Enrico, I can't see any engagement ring on your finger. Have you ever worn one?"

"A long while ago I noticed one on yours. My hat—and thank you!"

V

The perfumed evening filled all the corners of Ferrara and trickled over the labyrinths of her streets like a drop of seawater, pouring into the ears and filling the skull with deafness.

The coffee-house was a hubbub of noise. Only a single, fragile side-street led to the coffee-house. The town, deafened and stunned, encircled it on all sides, holding its breath because the evening drove into one of the little side-streets and precisely into this one where there was the coffee-house at the corner.

Camilla was deep in thought. She was waiting for Heine, who had gone into the post-office next door to the coffee-house.

Why in the world didn't he want to write the telegram in the coffee-house and send it over by messenger? Is it possible that he is not satisfied with an ordinary formal telegram? Was there a strong and really emotional liaison? But on the other hand he would have entirely forgotten about the telegram if she had not reminded him. And who was Rondolfina? She

would have to ask about her. But could she? Obviously, these were intimate things. Heavens, I am like a little girl. I can, I must. To-day I have obtained the right to know everything; to-day I shall lose the right to know everything. They spoilt you, my dear—those artists. But this one . . . And Relinquimini . . . ? What a remote person! In spring? Oh, no, earlier—perhaps on New Year's Eve? No, he was never really close to me . . . And now . . .”

“What are you talking about, Camilla?”

“Why are you so melancholy, Enrico? Don't grieve. I shall let you free. You can write the telegrams by dictating them to the lackey. Send a telegram like that home, it will only be three hours late, there is a train which leaves Ferrara for Venice at night, and Milan too, and the delay won't be more than . . .”

“What are you talking about, Camilla?”

“Why are you so melancholy, Enrico? Tell me something about Rondolfina?”

Heine trembled and sprung from his chair.

“Who told you? He was here? He was here in my absence? Where is he, where is he, Camilla?”

“You turned pale, Enrico. Who are you talking about? I asked you about a woman. Isn't that so? Or perhaps I didn't pronounce it correctly. Perhaps it is Rondolfino. It all depends on the vowel. Sit down. People are looking at us.”

“Who told you about her? Did he tell you anything? But how did it come here? We are only here by accident—I mean, no one knows we are here.”

“Enrico, there was no one and nothing happened while you were in the telegraph office, I give you my word. But it is becoming curiouser and curiouser every minute. Are there two of them?”

“It's a miracle—incomprehensible to the reason . . . I'm losing my mind. Who told you this name, Camilla? Where did you find it?”

“This night, in my dreams. It's such a common name. And you still haven't told me who Rondolfina is. Miracles do still happen—but let us leave them alone. Who is she, Enrico?”

“O Camilla, Rondolfina is you!”

“What an incorrigible actor you are! No, no! Let me go! Don't touch me!”

Both jumped up. Camilla's was a single movement, an irrevocably impetuous manœuvre. Only the little table separated them. Camilla clutched the back of a chair, something rose between her and her decision; something stirred within her, and like a merry-go-round, in a circular wave, it drew the coffee-pot upwards, sideways. . . . She was lost. . . . Tear it away, tear her necklace. . . .

In the same loathsome merry-go-round the chain of faces broke away, moved away, floated in the air . . . imperials . . . monocles . . . lorgnettes . . . ; then in large and ever-increasing quantities, the conversations at all the tables stumbled against their unhappy table: she still saw it, still leaned against it, it might pass . . . no . . . the discordant orchestra was falling out of tune.

"*Camericere*, water!"

VI

She was slightly feverish.

"What a tiny room you have. . . . Yes, that's right; thank you very much. I shall lie down for a while. It is malaria, but then . . . I have a flat of my own. Don't leave me. It may come at any moment. Enrico!"

"Yes, darling."

"Why are you so silent? No, no, it is not necessary, better as it is. Ah, Enrico, I can't remember whether there was a morning to-day. Are they all still there?"

"What, Camilla?"

"The flowers."

"We'll have to take them away during the night. What a heavy perfume it is! How much must the perfume weigh?"

"I shall have them taken away. What are you doing, Camilla?"

"I am getting up. By myself, thank you. It's all over now. I can stand on my own legs. . . . Yes, they must be taken away. But where can we take them? Wait a moment. I have a flat of my own in the Ariosto square. Surely you can see it from here!"

"It is dark already. A little cooler, perhaps."

"Why are there so few people in the street?"

"Schsch, they can hear every word."

"What are they speaking about?"

"I don't know, Camilla. Students, probably. Boasting, probably, perhaps about the same things that we . . ."

"Let me see it. Now they are standing at the corner. Heavens, how he threw the boy over his head! Now it is quiet again. How oddly the light clings to the branches. But there are no street-lamps to be seen. Are we the last?"

"The last what, Camilla?"

"Are there any floors above us?"

"Probably, Camilla."

Camilla leaned out of the window and peered over the cornice at the street below.

"No . . ."—but Heine did not let her finish her speech. "There is nobody

there at all," she repeated, as she disengaged herself from his embrace.

"What is the matter?"

"I thought there was a man there, a lamp in the window and he threw crumpled leaves and shadows into the street through the window. I wanted to turn my face there, to catch it on the cheeks, but there was no one . . ."

"This is poetry, Camilla."

"Really? I don't know. There it is, near the theatre. Where there is a lilac-coloured glow."

"What is there, Camilla?"

"You are a queer fellow! Well, my house!"

"I understand, but it is all a kind of nervous paroxysm. I would like it if we had . . ."

"A room has already been ordered for you."

"How terribly thoughtful of you! What time is it? We must go. We must go and have a look at my room. It's very interesting."

They left number eight, smiling and as excited as schoolboys laying siege to Troy in the courtyard.

VII

Long before morning the churchbells were chattering garrulously about the approach of dawn, jerkily making their low and cold bows, leaping backwards and forward on the tumbling beams. Only one of the hotel lamps was burning. It kindled when the telephone bell crackled corrosively, and it was not extinguished afterwards. The lamp saw the porter, still half asleep as he left his pipe on the desk after a short quarrel with the man at the other end of the line; saw him as he lost himself in the depths of the corridor, emerging a short while later from the half darkness of the hotel. "Yes, the signor is leaving in the morning. He will call you in half an hour if it is really urgent. Have the goodness to leave your number. And tell me, please, whom must he call?"

The lamp continued to burn while the man from number eight, who had been called to the telephone, came out of the side corridor into the main corridor in stockinged feet, on tiptoes and still dressing.

The lamp was opposite the room. The man from number eight, in order to reach the telephone, had to walk down the corridor, and the first step he made took place somewhere near room number eighty. After a short conversation with the porter his features changed—nervous agitation gave place to sudden recklessness and curiosity, and he seized the telephone boldly and, after going through the whole technical ritual, began to speak with the editor of *Voce*.

"Listen, it's terrible. Who told you I was suffering from sleeplessness?"

.

"I imagine you came to the telephone by mistake while you were climbing the steeple. What are they ringing the bells for? What is it all about?"

.

"Yes, I remained a day longer."

.

"The lackey was right. I did not give them my home address and I have no intention of giving it to them."

.

"For you? Not at all! I did not think of publishing it—at any rate not to-day as you seem to have thought."

.

"You won't need it at all."

.

"Don't get into a temper, signor editor. I beg you to be cool."

.

"Relinquimini will not have to make you the mediator."

.

"Because he has no need of a mediator."

.

"May I remind you once more of your incalculable worth when you are calm. Relinquimini has never lost a notebook in his life."

.

"Excuse me. This is your first unequivocal statement. No, a thousand times no!"

.

"Still talking about that? Good, I shall admit it. Within the limits of yesterday's issue of *Voce*, it is blackmail. But it is not blackmail at all outside these limits."

.

"It was yesterday. At six o'clock."

.

"If you could only guess what rose out of the yeast of this invention, you would call it by still harder names and they would be still further from the truth than the one you had the goodness to utter just now."

"Willingly. To-day I have no objections to saying it. Heinrich Heine."

"Just so."

"Very pleased to hear it."

"What are you saying?"

"Very willingly. How to manage it? I am so sorry I have to leave to-day. Come to the station and we'll spend a short time together."

"Nine thirty-five. Whatever the time—a chain of surprises. Better not come."

"Come to the hotel. During the day. It will be better. Or to my flat. During the evening. In tails, and don't forget to bring the flowers."

"Yes, yes, signor editor. You are—a prophet."

"Or to-morrow, on the duelling square outside the town."

"I don't know, perhaps it is quite serious."

"Or if you are busy during the next two days, come to the *Campo Santo* the day after to-morrow."

"You think so?"

"You think so?"

"What a strange conversation at the beginning of the day. Forgive me, I am tired, I must go back to my room."

P A S T E R N A K

"I can't hear? Number eight? Oh, yes. Yes, yes, number eight. It is a marvellous room, signor editor—a climate entirely of its own, where there has been eternal spring for five hours. Good-bye, signor editor."

Heine mechanically turned down the switch.

"Don't put it out, Enrico!"—a voice came from the darkness of the corridor.

"Camilla!"

SOME NOTES ON CRÉTEIL AND FRENCH POETRY

JACQUES BARZUN

My dear Laughlin:

You ask me to write about the significance of the "Abbaye de Créteil" in modern French literature, and more particularly about my father's share in that current of ideas before the First World War which shaped so much that followed, from Surrealism onwards. Doubtless the account of his work, and the sample of it, in *Transition* (Spring, 1938), were both too brief to satisfy your curiosity. But if I comply with your request for information, you will understand that I do so rather as an historian than as a critic. A good many people who, I hope, are still living in France could give you a better estimate of the facts, though they might not share my professional interest in dates. Anyhow, these potential contributors to *New Directions* are at the moment incommunicado, and I am glad to sketch the outline of that important and neglected period between the end of Symbolism and Modernism properly so-called.

If you look up *Abbaye* in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th edition, you will find your suspicion confirmed that it was not a monastic establishment but simply a literary colony founded by some enthusiastic young men in 1906. The article lists a number of names—Charles Vildrac, Albert Doyen, Georges Duhamel, René Arcos, Jules Romains, and Henri Barzun. It should also include the critic Alexandre Mercereau and the painter Albert Gleizes—one of the early Cubists. Albert Doyen was the musician of the group, later the founder and conductor of the concerts known as *Fêtes du Peuple*. But Jules Romains is mistakenly said to have been a member of the community. I will show his important connection later on.

The Créteil colony was called "Abbaye" partly in memory of Rabelais' secular Abbaye de Thélème, partly because the buildings and grounds chosen by the company in the quiet village of Créteil, not far from Paris, suggested a priory. I should add here, by the way, that although my parents' house was nearby and I was born contemporaneously with the venture, I give you these and other facts by virtue of research and recollected hearsay. Like the journalist in the Sherlock Holmes tale who could not write up the murder on his own doorstep, I was an impartial eyewitness to certain facts now become historic but I was unhappily prevented by youth and inexperience from recording them at first hand.*

The object of the Abbaye you can readily guess: like other literary groups before and since it combined artistic convictions with a plan to defeat the prevalent commercialism in the arts. The members of the colony in-

* The most accurate statement in print about the Abbaye is by Christian Sénéchal, *L'Abbaye de Créteil*, Paris, 1930, 149 pp.

tended to print and publish their verse and prose—and do it more attractively than a job printer—to exhibit paintings and hold musicales, as well as invite like-minded artists to join them. Moreover, the bachelors in the group could live in the Abbaye itself and compose under presumably ideal conditions.

The enterprise lasted two years. It broke up by common consent for the usual reasons of diverse temperaments, unequal commitments, and lack of funds. Nevertheless those two years had significance, and before it dispersed, the Abbaye had left a sufficiently distinct mark on the new century to elicit continuing attention, at least in France, from that day to this. By combining a social and an esthetic purpose, the Abbaye raised the characteristic issues of our epoch: how shall men organize their life in common, and what kind of art shall express this new life? The original impulse to found a secular “order” was obviously a sense of common interest, a guild feeling in reaction against the extreme competitive individualism into which the modern artist was forced. And to understand that feeling, it is only necessary to remember that these young men, born in the late Seventies and early Eighties, were the direct heirs of the Symbolists, whose criticism of society took the form of withdrawal from it and even of deliberate anti-social behavior. The next step was to band together and defeat “the market” on its own terms.

The word ‘guild’ was not then in common use, but the belief in the artist as a socially responsible craftsman was gaining ground. Ruskin and William Morris had done some effective pioneering across the Channel, but more direct influences were working upon the minds of the young Frenchmen who formed the Abbaye—the poetry of Walt Whitman, recently discovered, the urban muse of Emile Verhaeren, and the writings of Zola and Anatole France. The upshot, which is also the distinctive contribution of the Abbaye, was the bringing to birth of two literary tendencies, one known as Unanimism and associated with the name of Jules Romains; the other variously referred to as orchestral poetry or the technique of simultaneity and drawn from the work of my father, H. M. Barzun.

Romains’ connection with the Abbaye was that of an occasional visitor and close friend of some of the members. He did not live or work in Créteil, for during the existence of the group he was at the École Normale preparing his *agrégation*. But he bicycled over on Sundays and took part in the discussions out of which grew the later separate and antagonistic formulations. The theory of Unanimism appeared in 1908 as a preface to a volume of poems by Romains, published at and by the Abbaye.* Unanimism dwells,

* *La Vie Unanime*, Paris (Créteil), 1908. The preface is in verse and its mysticism is intelligible only when taken together with the titles of later sections and poems. In 1925, a second edition appeared with a more explicit preface in prose.

as the name suggests, on the collective or mass character of the modern world and argues that literary form should take cognizance of so important a cultural fact.

But as the term Unanimism further suggests, the theory involves the assumption that mankind thinks and acts as a single Idea. The world is accordingly to be sung, not even as a Hegelian discord, but as a unison. It is at this point that the two esthetics of the Abbaye group diverge. The unanimity of spirit posited by Romains either does not exist, or it has to be imposed from outside. If literature should find a characteristic form to render this faith or this hope concrete, it would be monolithic. Speaking as if mankind knew no conflicts, the poet would substitute his lyric singleness for a dramatic orchestration—consonant or dissonant, but seldom in unisons.

It is outside my assignment to pursue much further the work of Romains, which in its prose aspects is well known in this country. It is enough to say that the poetical expression of his Unanimist vision (in which he was followed to a certain extent by Vildrac and Duhamel) took the form of meditative remarks or imagist impressions couched in short unrimed lines, the so-called *vers blanc* rarely used in French poetry.

To Barzun this seemed inadequate and anachronistic. It struck him as a reduction of a world-wide poetical substance to the limits of a personal utterance. Unanimism proposed to remain simply lyrical when the times seemed to call for dramatic or orchestral complexity. Scanning tradition for the "elements that were wanted," Barzun found them in the history of poetic drama, making his own synthesis and recording it in 1912 in a double publication—the essay "L'Ere du Drame" and the volume of poems, "L'Hymne des Forces." Meanwhile he had attracted around him a number of other writers, including Cocteau, Marinetti, Apollinaire, Max Jacob, Joachim Gasquet, Carlos Larronde, Georges Polti, and Fernand Divoire, who contributed to the periodical "Poème et Drame" and controverted with the Unanimists, led by Duhamel.*

Ezra Pound, then in Paris, reported the battle in his monthly letter to *Poetry* (October 1913):

"M. Henri-Martin Barzun stands apart from the rest and preaches simultaneity, which is to say, he wishes us to write our poems for a dozen voices at once as they write an orchestral score . . . M. Barzun's ideas, as expressed in *l'Ere du Drame*, are interesting, and *l'Hymne des Forces* moved me by its content and underlying force rather than by its execution. The proletariat would seem to be getting something like a coherent speech. This seems to me significant. Though M. Barzun's propositions may seem, at

* Duhamel wrote criticism in the *Mercure de France* and summarized his objections in the satirical comedy, *L'Oeuvre des Athlètes* (1914) first performed at the Vieux Colombier in 1920.

first, fitted for comic rather than for serious expression, I am not sure that he has not hit upon the true medium for democratic expression, the fitting method of synthesis."

By the time this was written, a large-scale work in progress throughout the preceding seven years—the poem *Orphéide*—had been completed and was circulating in manuscript among a fairly wide and cosmopolitan public.* It was on the point of being published, despite intrinsic typographical difficulties, when the General Mobilization of August 1914 supervened and plunged the author and the movement into eclipse.

II

If it is conceded that the changing sensibility of the poet does perpetually reshape the form and technique of poetry, and even the conception of what poetry is for, then the radical "proposition" embodied by Barzun in *L'Orphéide* appears both thoroughgoing and, by now, intelligible. We have got used to many things done upon the body of language since 1914; but at that time the principle of simultaneity in poetry necessarily seemed cataclysmic. For it brought into question again the basis of all poetic techniques since Lessing's *Laokoon*. The western world had agreed that poetry was to be read the way it was written—one word after another. All discussions of "technique" dealt with "lines." "This is a good line; that is a bad line." A poet is known by his lines, in much the same way that a volume of poems is known by the irregular aspect of the right-hand margin. It is even believed by the innocent that Homer was a *writer* and that the Greek dramas originally sounded very like the girls' school commencements which they now adorn.

But if the scribe tradition were rejected and instead of lines and books the poet should begin with sounds and sensations, he would logically arrive at the view that his page was simply a convenient portion of space in which to organize the symbols for what he hears. Space relations would indicate time relations as well—would create a larger syntax for his use—and he might then give himself and others the feeling that he was composing a world in motion instead of merely "extending remarks" like a Congressman.

Of course there would be innumerable difficulties, both of creation and of perception, but by cutting the Gordian knot of one-word-at-a-time, the new mode would at last fulfill the endlessly repeated desire of modern poets †

* From England, F. S. Flint, Richard Aldington, Harold Monroe; from Germany, Richard Dehmel, Stefan Zweig, Johannes Schlaf. Others will be found listed in *Poème et Drame*, November 1912–July 1914.

† And ancient too. If the shield of Achilles in Book 18 of the *Iliad* is "improbable," it is because it is a perfect symbol of the poet's desire to create a world that moves.

for a "thick," manifold, synchronous kind of expression. I have in mind not merely the titles of well-known poems, like Gautier's *Symphonie en Blanc Majeur*, nor Poe's considerations on the sonority of verse, but the numberless hints of our contemporaries that we must find in their verse or prose consciously "symphonic" effects. From Amy Lowell's "polyphonic prose" through Vachel Lindsay's juxtaposed marginalia, to the innovations of Gide or the Surrealists, the clear intent is to achieve simultaneity in literature.* But do we really want it, or not? The question calls for an answer. If we do, it is not enough to keep "polyphony" outside the work, in the introduction, like a poor relation hesitating on the doormat. Either build it in or forget it.

To be sure, it can be argued that poetry is inescapably linear because of the difficulty of simultaneously apprehending all the parts of an "orchestral" or "choric" poem written like a score. But the argument from difficulty is of very little weight in these days of sprung rhythm, semantic criticism, and jabberwock prose. No serious critic makes it a test of poetry that it shall be read at sight. What are in fact the two clearest achievements of modern literature which Jolas links together as "the revolution of the word"? One is the breakdown of conventional syntax in verse, the other the break-up of conventional words in prose. Both of them have changed the meaning of "reading," which is now an act of studious re-creation. From Rimbaud to Laforgue and Eliot, grammatical relations have been splintered in order precisely to make possible juxtaposition of ideas, to play on ambiguities, to rouse old echoes and achieve depths and differences of level.

All this is part of a new inner organization of poetical stuff which forcibly suggests the orchestral poem while falling short of it in representative form. The architecture in the poet's mind is not given us, but only the means by which to infer it. In prose, largely through the efforts of Joyce, we have the juxtaposition of parts of words, which is again a half-way simultaneity: "saptimber" being really:

sap
timber
September

This is beautifully compact and may be so in other instances, but the device in general provides no clue by which to differentiate the several levels of thought and no plastic form for the masses of material handled by the artist. So that one can almost sympathize with the old-fashioned gentleman who rubbed his eyes and asked, "Do I Finnegans Wake or dream?" †

Besides, tradition itself suggests another course. It is noteworthy that

* Metaphor is of course the first form of simultaneity.

† We now have the excellent set of clues provided by Joseph Campbell and Henry Morton Robinson in their *Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake*, but it is, once again, outside the work itself.

when the manuscript *Orphéide* was being passed from hand to hand, Mallarmé's *Jamais un Coup de Dé n'Abolira le Hasard* had hardly been heard of, but the controversy over the orchestral poem brought it back into print from the pages of the obscure review *Cosmopolis*.^{*} The connection was clear. If we can trust Rémy de Gourmont's account of the matter, Mallarmé was working at the end of his life upon an "unknown masterpiece" of which the *Coup de Dé* was a preliminary sketch. "The highest joy," said Mallarmé, "being the comprehension of the world, this joy must be given to all . . . the work of art will therefore be a drama, and of such a kind that all will be able to re-create it; that is to say, suggested by the poet and not directly expressed by his particular genius." This is more than groping towards the double goal of re-creation and dramatic participation which the *Orphéide* attempts. And Mallarmé's first "sketch," the *Coup de Dé*, is similarly revealing. It is a kind of panel on which eight different kinds of typographical fonts indicate separate "levels," arranged through wide stretches of that "white space" which Proust thought such an important element in all literature. The "poem," it is true, is still a sequence, readable across the space, rather than a simultaneity; it is something like Blaise Cendrars' *Transsibérien*—itself an offshoot of the orchestral poem—a poster rather than a score.

It would be tedious to recount the number of imitations and approximations which the joint effect of the *Orphéide* and the *Coup de Dé*—both antedating the last war—have brought forth since. Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* is perhaps the best known, being also the most amusing. Pound had rightly forecast the immediate use of the new technique for comic effects. But it may some time be of interest to record how many elements now a part of our literary stock-in-trade owe their being to these two seminal works. According to Man Ray, it was in the wake of simultaneity in poetry that the Surrealists emerged, in the Twenties of their age and our century, firing manifestoes and juggling with words, ideas, shapes, and properties.

III

"But what is this *Orphéide*? Let us get to the poem itself." I can hear you, my dear Laughlin, prompting me with a touch of impatience. Every technique, you may say, must be finally judged by its fruits, and must even be transcended by them so that we may forget technique under the impact of a real experience. Just so, but in the absence of any printed version of the poem, I must stick to my role of expositor and avoid making judgments which would defy verification. Let me only say that like Joyce's last work, the *Orphéide* is an epic of death and resurrection. Its theme is man's ef-

^{*} May 1897. The NRF reprint dates from 1913. See R. de Gourmont, *Le Problème du Style*, 1902, pp. 200, 313-4.

fort, typified by the flight of an airship. First its creation, then its journey, then its destruction ending in death and a re-beginning. Placing the philosophic consciousness in the flying ship enables the poet to re-create a world and convey its comprehension to the beholder as Mallarmé desired. Not only the earth and the myriad activities of its inhabitants, but the skies—the screen on which man's knowledge is projected—and the myths and histories of peoples and places pass in review, ordered in accordance with a vision which is, in a sense, instantaneous as well as simultaneous, from the first page to the 300th.

The substance of this mass is very diverse. There are choruses, dialog, songs and unisons; also soliloquies, fragments of prose, pure sounds and even noises. Freed from set form by the whole tradition of French poetry from the Romantics to the Symbolists, and encouraged by Whitman's example, the poet could mould rhythm and speech upon the contours of the dramatic construction. I mean here by dramatic the perpetual sense of contrast or echo and the recurrent desire to elaborate the thought or thicken the sensation of any given moment. To say all this is to say that the work is very complex in both conception and execution and needs study, as perhaps the fragment printed below cannot sufficiently indicate. In any case, it is quite futile for the reader to glance at the page as if it were the evening's headlines, or to seek for *a* line which he can carry away and quote as "a fine line." Indeed, it is possible that polemical needs no longer existing may have induced the poet to eschew anything approaching lyricism in the conventional sense. Something closer to Byron's purposive commonplace or Auden's casualness seems to have been his deliberate intent.

And this brings me to the final question about the poem, why publication interrupted by the First World War should not have been resumed by now. Only fragments have appeared. I can state the problem better than I can resolve it. For some years after the last war, it was clear that the literary scene was too full of chaotic and short-lived movements to make the launching of a large work opportune. The "schools" then sprouting—Dadaists, Surrealists, Expressionists, Abstractionists, and always the indefatigable Futurists—contained too much that came in garbled form precisely out of solider prewar creations not to make a discreet withholding almost instinctive, if only to avoid mis-classification.

Then came the re-opening in Paris of the "laboratory" theatre *Art et Action*, which devoted itself for twenty years to the concrete rendering of the technique embodied in *L'Orphéide*. The idea of presentation is of course implicit in any dramatic work from Greek tragedy to Mallarmé's "unknown masterpiece," and this aspect of Barzun's poem was in his mind as far back as the Abbaye, when he maintained that the new poetry must be less "a book for readers" than "a song for singers." This does not preclude

fireside delectation, but it stresses the choral and mass character inseparable from "comprehension of the world" and "participation in a drama." With these thoughts in mind, publishing in book form seemed less and less important in proportion as the adoption of the technique by others seemed more likely.*

Even so, the "score" might profitably have seen the light of day, had not a perpetual reworking of the poem, coupled with a true indifference to fame *as a poet*, made postponement follow postponement. The author has been known to compare himself to Jodelle, the "father" of French classical tragedy, who paved the way for Corneille's achievement by furnishing a model and neglecting to exploit it. Whatever be the secret of psychology involved here, one can appreciate the logic of feeling which dictates that a "collective" conception of poetry should not go with the usual egotism of the poet brandishing his sonnet.

IV

This ends the story, for the time being. Perhaps you will let me add one word more on a matter which interests me as an historian of ideas in a complex century. Have we not in the facts I have set down a representative instance—all questions of value aside—of scrambled chronology and cultural confusion? What we all term modern French poetry is the work of Rimbaud and the Symbolists. Even Baudelaire is relatively new to us; Péguy and Lautréamont are just beginning to be familiar names. On top of that, without transition, comes "postwar Modernism." Yet in the Abbaye and its ramifications we find a whole generation of men, many of whom died in the trenches thirty years ago, who in their time worked to a point presumably beyond the last reaches of Symbolism. If at the conclusion of trench warfare there were so many convergent stirrings in literature—lump them all as Surrealism for short—it was assuredly no accident. The men and ideas I have described, with others in the other arts, form the missing link.

But how tedious is history compared to a good poem! Your exemplary patience in reading thus far, deserves poetic pleasure as its reward. I hope you may get it from the small fragment of the *Orphéide* which follows.

* The latest metamorphosis of the idea was its use for radio drama in Paris before the present war. See Carlos Larronde, *Théâtre Invisible*, Paris, 1936.

		foules	clament	
		foules	clament	espoir
0	vieux monde	les foules	clament leur espoir	leur
Exhortation		foules		
0	vieux monde			
Exhortation			clament	espoir
0	vieux monde	les foules	clament leur espoir	leur
		foules	clament	espoir
		foules		titans
Exhortation			monde	titans
	Temps nouveaux	seuil du monde	des titans	
Exhortation				
	Temps nouveaux	seuil du monde	des titans	
		seuil		titans
				titans

L'immense

L'immense

L'immense

foi

foi

foi

foi profonde

inaugural

foi

augural

foi profonde

devant le temple inaugural

foi

inaugural

foi profonde

foules

clament

augural

foi

foules

clament

foi

foules

proclament

Héros

les foules assemblées proclament

Héros

foules assemblées

Héros

foules assemblées

et des Héros

foules

Héros

Héros

Héros

polyphonique

voix

polyphonique

voix

poly

voix

plane

poly

voix

plane

voix

plane

voix

Drame

fronton

hymnes

s'Arige

le fronton du Drame

jaillir

poèmes

jaillir

jaillir

du Drame

et les synthèses vont

jaillir

jaillir

poèmes

jaillir

naissance

Drame

jaillir

hymnes

la naissance

de leur âme

la

âme

que ton chant

domine

ton chant

domine

chant

domine

domine

amour

gerbe d'amour

joie

amour

l'universelle joie

plane

rythmant

l'universelle joie

voix

plane

l'universelle

l'immense voix

plane

voix

étoiles

amas d'étoiles

ordre

étoiles

colonnes de l'ordre à venir

lait astral

colonnes de l'ordre attendu

lait astral

colonnes de l'ordre à venir

venir

ébranle

monte

clameur ébranle les nues

un chant monte souverain

clameur ébranle les nues

l'orage

l'orage

l'orage

l'orage

rythmant

faisceau du verbe

rythmant l'universelle joie

faisceau du verbe

universelle joie

polyphonique

verbe

polyphonique

amour

du verbe

polyphonique

gerbe d' amour

faisceau

Selections from

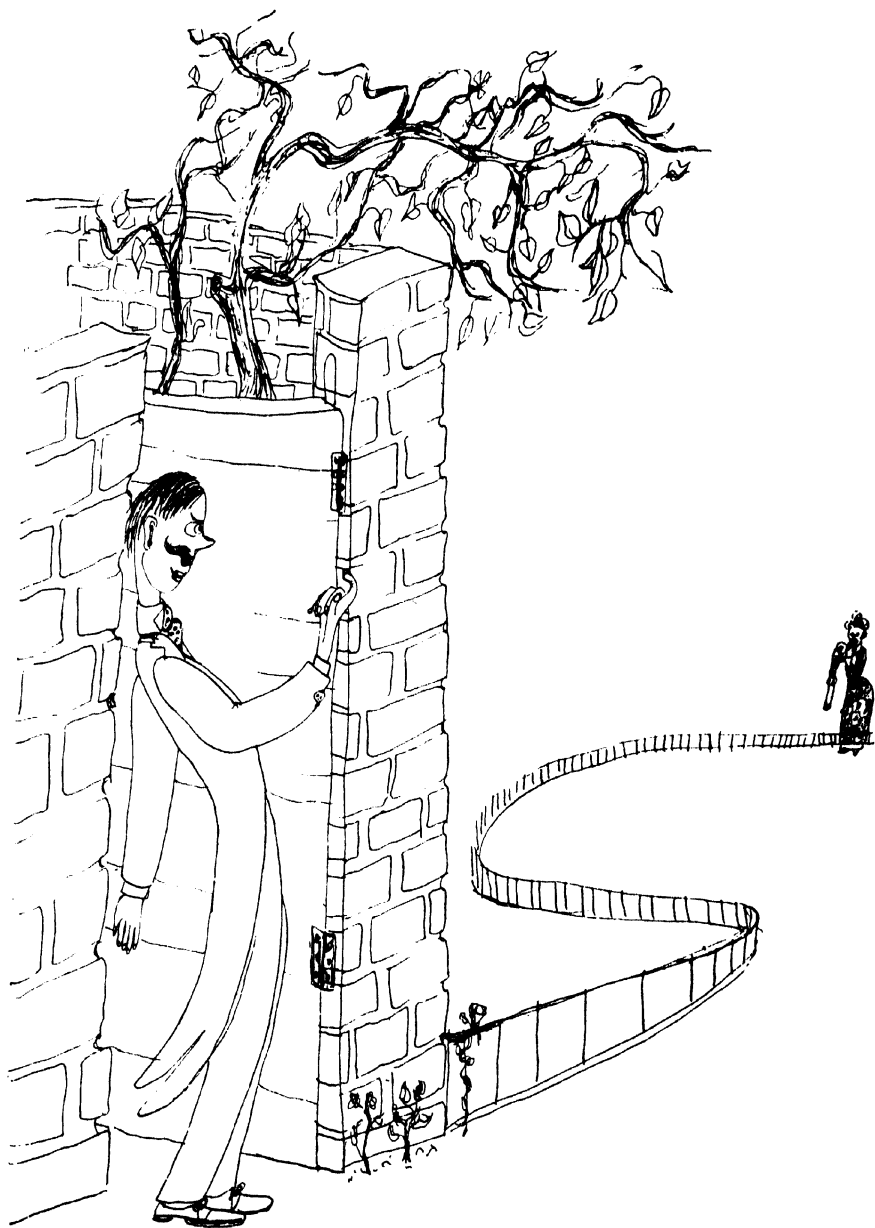
THE BRITISH POETS ILLUSTRATED

MARGARET BLOY GRAHAM

ALFRED, LORD T.

Maud (Part I)

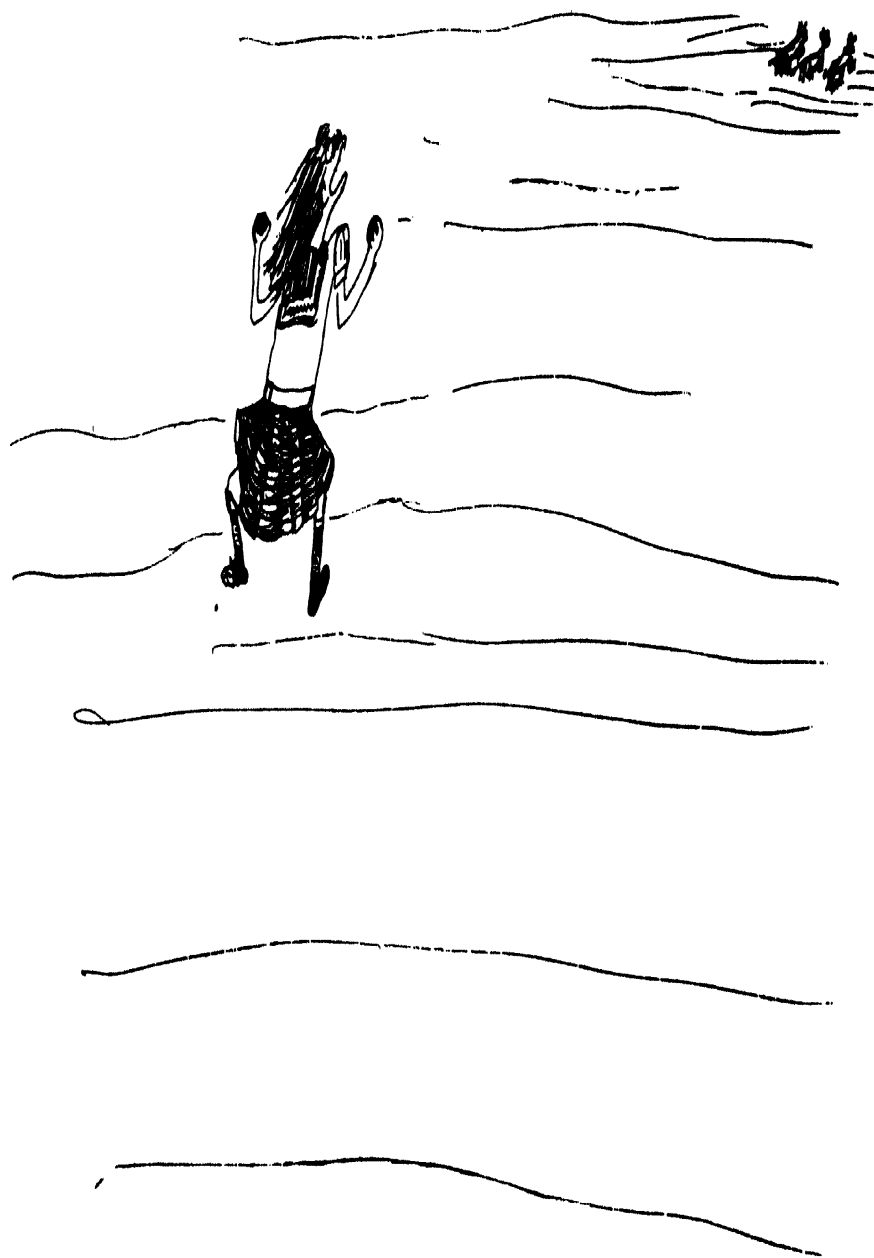
“Come into the garden, Maud,
For the black bat, night, has flown,
Come into the garden, Maud,
I am here at the gate alone;
And the woodbine spices are wafted abroad,
And the musk of the roses blown.”



CHARLES KINGSLEY

The Sands o' Dee

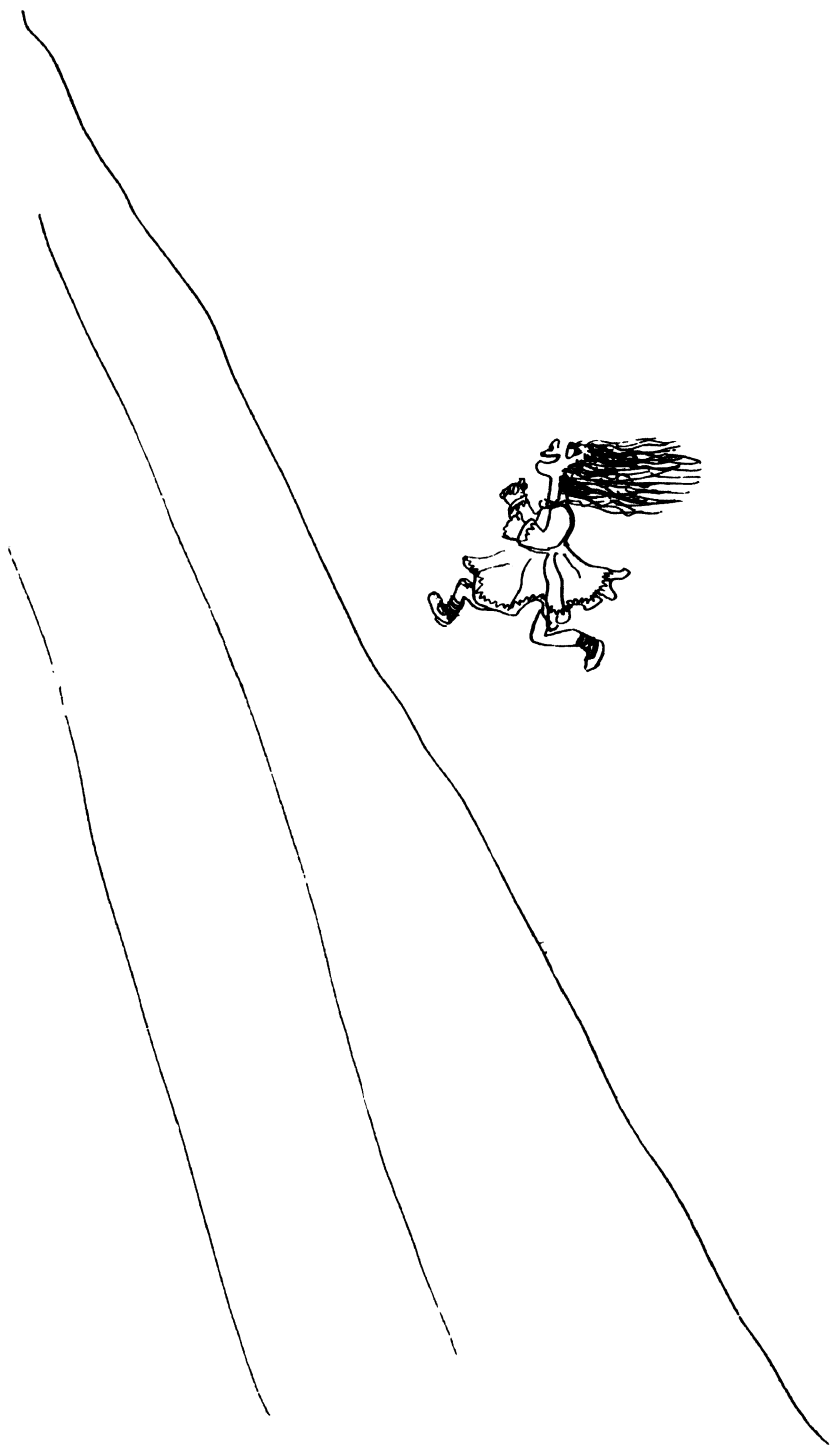
“O Mary, go and call the cattle home,
And call the cattle home,
And call the cattle home,
Across the sands o' Dee!”



WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

The Education of Nature

“She shall be as sportive as the fawn
That wild with glee across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs;”



PSYCHOMACHIA IN JUKE TIME

TASILO RIBISCHKA

Awash with sex I floundered
before her fishwide mouth

hippiate piscatory blondina
she was my midriff's morsel

Pretty princess, I softly sibilated
Let us sojourn briefly in my hotel room

Sir, she replied, I cannot oblige you
It is time for my daily samahdi

Sorrowfully then I departed
dragged leaden feet from that place

In childhood my mother imparted
Respect for Holy Things!

FOUR WAR DRAWINGS

RALSTON CRAWFORD

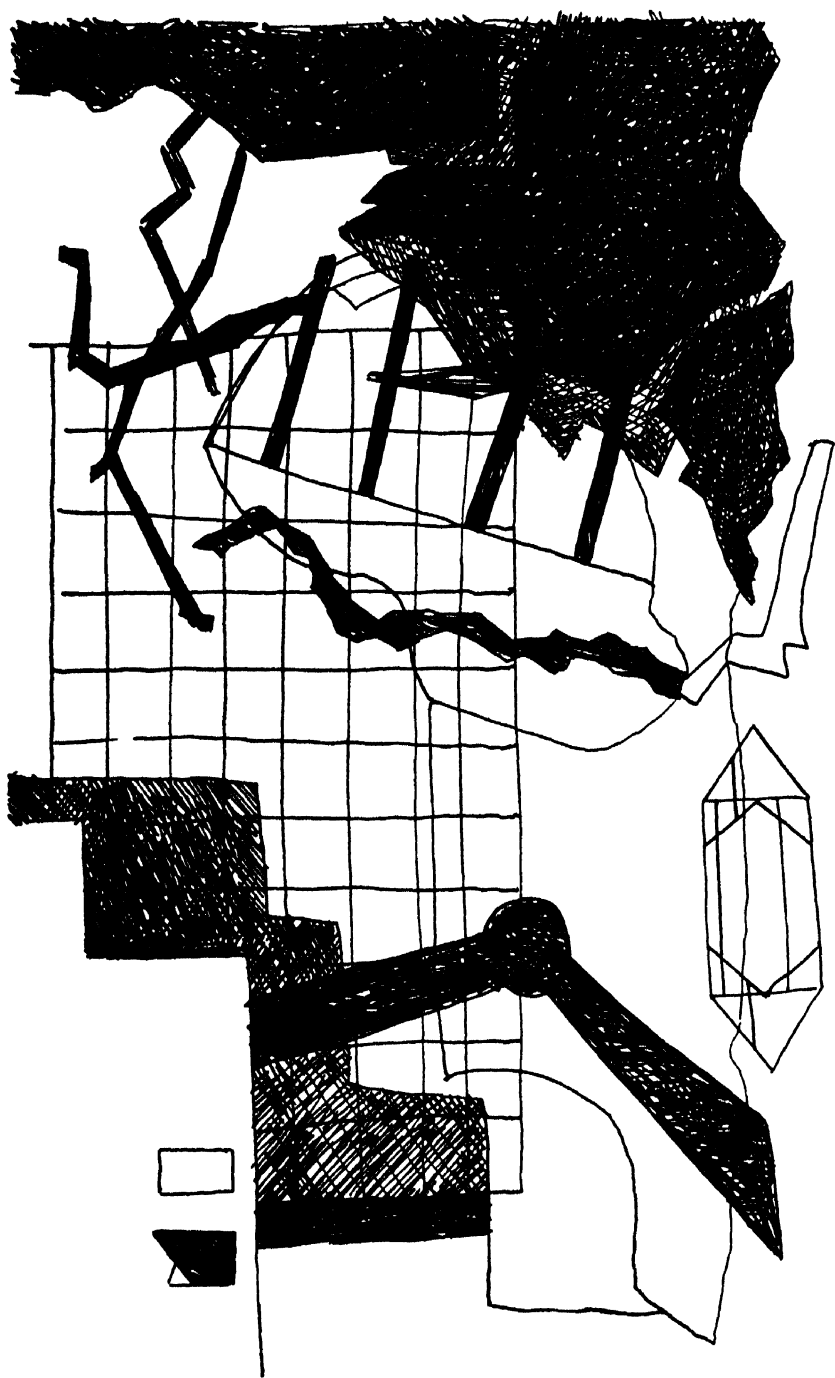
(*Courtesy of The Downtown Gallery*)

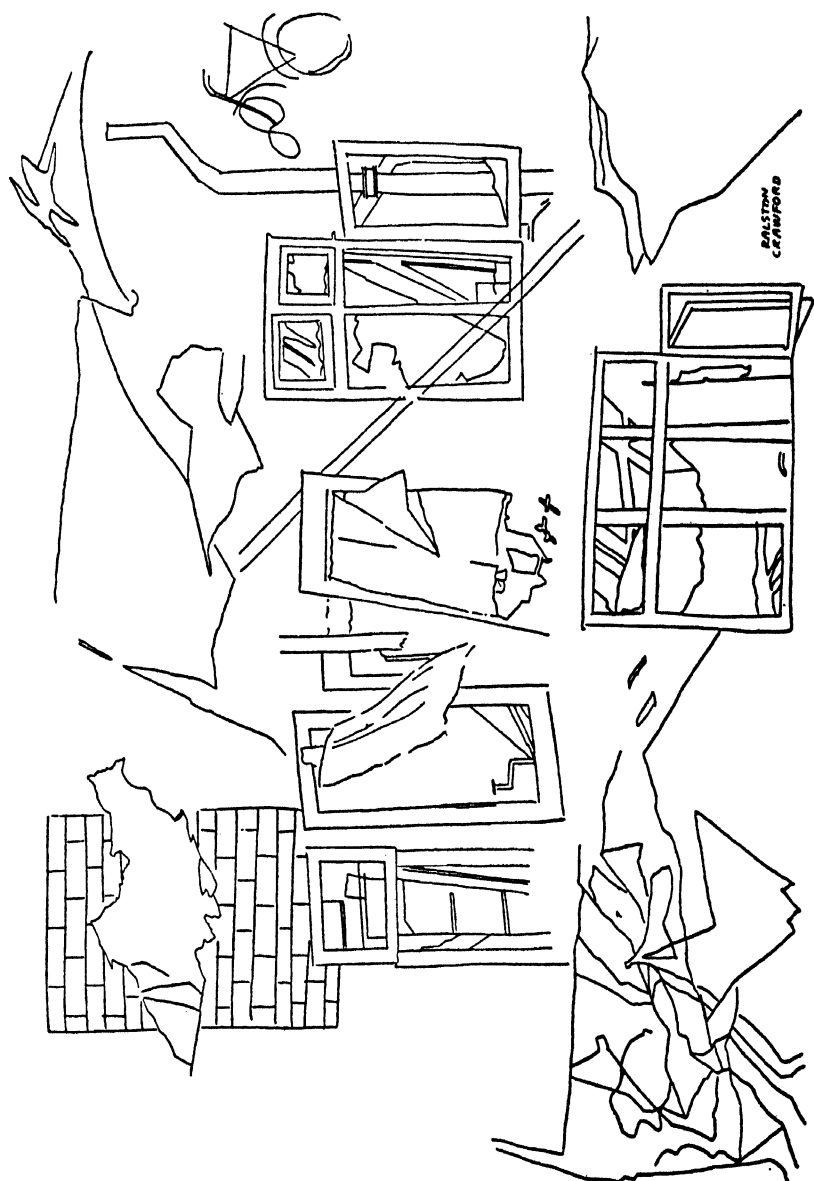
THESE line drawings of Ralston Crawford, the distinguished abstract painter, provide the kind of commentary on war which has been too rare among our artists. They serve, at the same time, as a reminder and an illustration of what the real possibilities of "documentary" art might be.

For Crawford's drawings have grown out of careful anatomical studies of wrecked planes, boats, bridges and people. The structural details have been supplied by various media—photographs, written reports (both technical and eye-witness), verbal accounts and actual primary observation. During his four years in the Army his trained sensorium has been subjected to a constant bombardment of fact, the implications of which could not be evaded. What emerged was a recognition of destruction as the central physical and psychic fact of our time. Over two years ago, I saw literally hundreds of small preliminary pen-and-ink sketches in which Crawford had worked into most intricate and varied designs bits of broken fuselage, scraps of twisted barbed wire, and fragments of all kinds of debris. Out of these exploratory sketches he has now composed about 75 drawings which are the summation, at this time, of his reaction to war.

The drawings which are here reproduced reveal the effect of discipline and control upon the disjointed physical data upon which he has fixed his imagination. Chaos is at once the theme, the "objective correlative" and the moral of these pictures. Their informational content is none the less real, however, and, as in more traditional art, is achieved by means of distortion and emphasis. If the metaphor is not too literary, we can think of these scrupulously clinical compositions as at once a symbol and a warning of the death implicit in the atom-grinding *Weltanschauung* of our times.

—*Vivienne Koch*

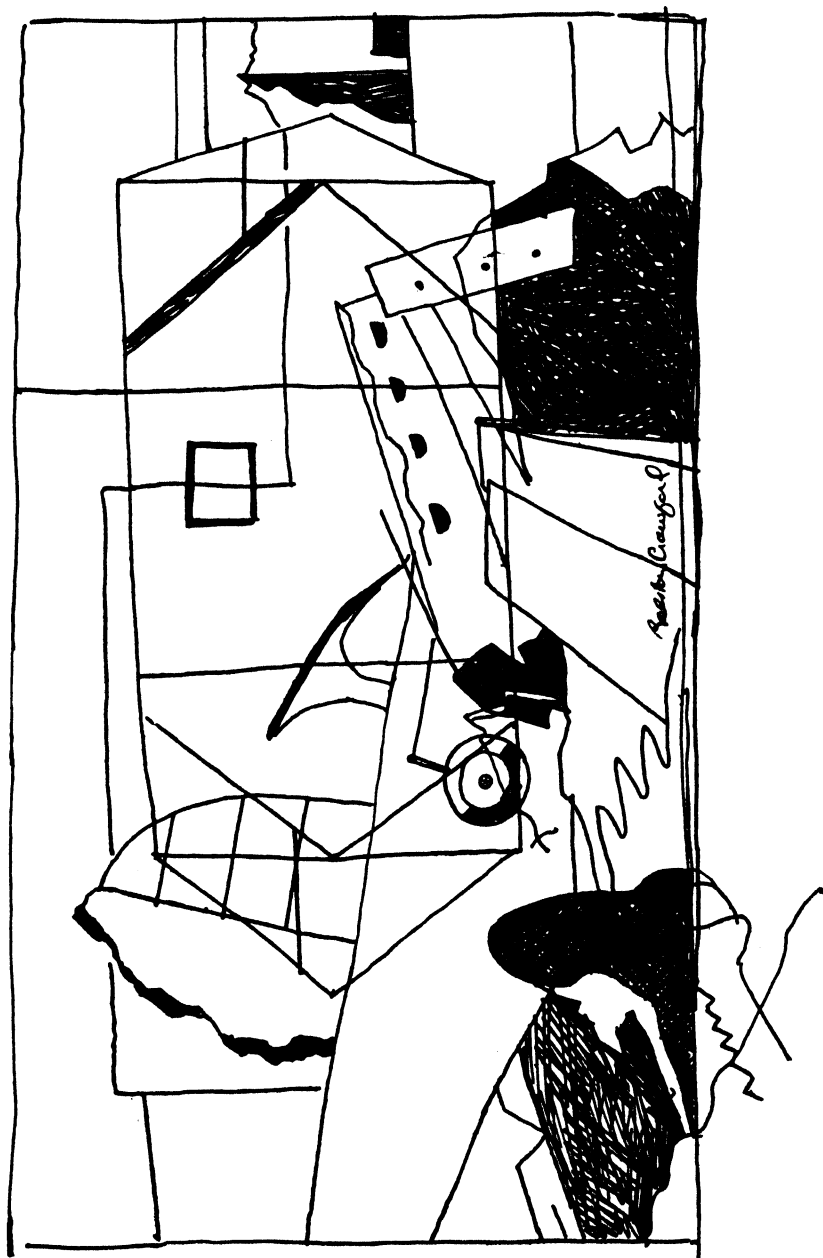




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